

THE FORUM GAZETTE

Vol 2 No. 19,

New Delhi 5 October—19 October 1987,

Fortnightly,

Rupees Two

R.S.S. Congress(I) Alliance Comes in the Open

(From our special Correspondent)

R.S.S. Chief Balasaheb Deoras's statement favouring Congress(I) and the AICC(I)'s welcome for this statement have once again come as a proof of ruling party's strategy to gain electoral victories by whipping up the majority communalism and Fundamentalist forces the attempts of to use state power for their perpetuation.

In the annual Vijayadashmi orations which are taken as a policy line of the RSS, Mr Deoras, in a surprising departure from the past practices, dwelt at length on the various aspects of the Congress-I politics today. "It is usually believed that we are anti-Congress. But this is wrong. Our founder, Dr. Hedgewar, was a senior Congressman. It is only because of the minority appeasement policy of the Congress that we have been opposing it," he said.

The RSS chief expressed

deep concern and pain over the developments within the Congress-I. "They are trading charges against one another, and the situation has come to such a pass that the party has received so severe blows that it cannot be the same again.

Mr. Deoras also said the RSS did not want the Centre to become weak. The situation in the country had become grave because of increasing terrorism, separatism, deteriorating law and order, rising prices. While the Congress was disintegrating, there was no alternative to it. Opposition parties were too divided to offer any effective alternative, he added.

AICC Welcome

AICC(I)'s general secretary Mr. N.C. Chaturvedi has welcomed this support. According to press reports in his statement, Chaturvedi has said that the Congress (I)

welcomed the statement of the RSS chief supporting the party's objectives. He said that the party's commitment to its objectives remained intact and anyone, including the RSS, was welcome to support them.

In the meantime, RSS sources in Delhi described the Nagpur speech as "routine". An RSS worker who did not want to be identified said that although the Delhi office itself had not received the full text of the extempore speech, they did not feel the need to check the veracity of the reported version as there was nothing alarming in it.

Thus, he said, there was nothing disputable in Mr Deoras's reported speech. In any

case, what he was supposed to have said was the truth and everyone could see that, he added.

In certain circles, Deoras's statement is being viewed as a ploy to pressurise the V P Singh camp into taking a more conciliatory attitude towards the BJP. The latent threat in the statement was that unless Singh changed his mind and the BJP and the RSS, the latter would line up behind Rajiv Gandhi.

The Past

Not many, however, agree with this hypothesis. They point out that links between the ruling party and the RSS have been improving

since Operation. Blue Star which was hailed wholeheartedly by Deoras.

Subsequently, the RSS had supported the Congress (I), especially following Indira Gandhi's assassination. During the 1984 general election, RSS cadre are said to have canvassed for Congress (I), candidates in preference over BJP candidates.

A case which is cited in support of this contention is the Lok Sabha poll in Patna where RSS activists campaigned for the Congress (I) candidate while working against the official BJP candidate, General S K Sinha.

Following the ruling party's
Continued on page 4

My Relatives Are the Best Political Organisers Says Devi Lal

A.S. Narang

When out of power oppose the family rule and nepotism tooth and nail, when in power practice it to the full, seems to have emerged as the golden rule in Indian politics. Latest in this game is Ch. Devi Lal the 100 plus days old Chief Minister of Haryana.

Ch. Devi Lal like his mentor in the Lok Dal had been one of the bitter critics of the trend of family rule. When Ch. Charan Singh himself fell victim to this

malice and projected his own son as heir apparent Devi Lal parted company with him. But once in power he too has started acting in the same way. He has given plum posts to his three sons, son-in-law, nephew and other relatives. Ch. Devi Lal's eldest son Om Parkash has been made chief of Haryana Lok Dal, his second son Ranjit Singh is an MLA from Rori and third son Pratap Singh till recently a Congress (I) member is chairman of the Haryana Social Welfare Board. Ch. Devi Lal's son-in-law Atamjeet Singh has been elevated to the post of Haryana's advocate general. His nephew, Dr. K.V. Singh acts as officer-on-special duty in Chief Minister's secretariat.

Not only Ch. Devi Lal has appointed his own relatives but also has started condoning the corrupt practices in this regard. Some times back his eldest son was caught smuggling watches at Delhi Air port. At that time being out of

power and engaged in oneupmanship competition for clean image Devi Lal publicly disowned his son. But in power the views are different. Talking to newsmen in Delhi on 24 September he said "Every body smuggles watches, The clever one gets away, the naive once are caught. In any case my son has been exonerated of the charges by the courts." Thus Devi Lal's sons are as honest or corrupt as any politicians and deserve to be rewarded accordingly.

The Best Organisers

Ch. Devi Lal defended the appointment of his relatives saying his relatives were the best political organisers and administrators. Not only that there is political justification too. About the appointment of Pratap Singh the ex-Congress (I) man Devi Lal said that he had done so to shut Pratap Singh's mouth because Congress men



Courtesy Times of India

were using him to issue statements against me every day" What a way to shut once

own sons mouth and what a price by the Congressman to
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The press has constantly urged upon the government of India to take appropriate political initiative in Punjab. The Government, it seems, is concerned more with the interests of the party than the country.

We reproduce below an editorial from the Economic and Political Weekly, Bombay. This editorial is yet another summary of the Punjab crisis, and callousness of the government.

September 19, 1987

ECONOMIC
AND
POLITICAL **WEEKLY**

Priests' Turn

It is impossible not to be struck by the government's relatively muted reaction to the call by the four high priests of the Akal Takht to the Sikh masses to lend their full support to the Sikh militants "in order to free themselves from the shackles of slavery". The statement, issued from the Golden Temple on September 9, accused the government of destroying the traditions and honour of the Sikhs by killing Sikh youth in false encounters and by desecrating their places of worship. The government's response to the priests' open declaration of support for the terrorists—home minister Buta Singh has said that it was sad and unfortunate that the high priests had allowed themselves to be used as willing tools of the extremists—is in sharp contrast to how it had reacted when in February this year the Sikh priests had, in an attempt to unify the Akali Dal, issued a 'hukumnama' dissolving the various factions of the Dal and directing their office-bearers to submit their resignations to clear the way for the formation of a united party. On that occasion, even though the Sikh priests' move concerned only the Akali Dal the government had insisted on portraying it as a dangerously seditious act and taken the unusual step of issuing a statement describing the actions of the priests as "machinations of communal, separatist and secessionist elements" and warning that these would not be tolerated. It also defies rational explanation that the government should let the priests get away with their declaration of support to the terrorists while it has kept Akali leaders like Prakash Singh Badal in prison without trial for a year or more.

It has been suggested that the government's low-key reaction to the Sikh priests' statement has been guided by the calculation that any action against them would "make heroes of them" and thus only serve the cause of the extremists. This may well be the case, but it has to be recognised that there is another factor which has equally, perhaps even more decisively, influenced the government's attitude and which exposes the political opportunism that has all through characterised its efforts to deal with the problem of the Sikh terrorists. While one part of the Sikh high priests' statement of September 9 was a call to the Sikh people to rally behind the extremists, the other part poured scorn and ridicule on the Akali Dal, including the Unified Akali Dal which had been earlier sponsored by the Akal Takht itself. The priests have asked the Sikh community to reject the Akali leadership which, according to them, "had become irrelevant since as far back as 1982 after the dharam yudh morcha" and had

been misleading the Sikhs. Further, the Akali leadership had, instead of facing the crisis, retreated and this amounted to "stabbing the community in the back and harming it both in and outside Punjab". Surely, this part of the high priests' statement must have been music to the government's ears?

The priests' rejection of the Akali Dal, all factions and groups of it, must be seen as fructification of sorts of the government's and the Congress party's objective of undermining the influence of the Akali Dal over the Sikhs sustained through its control of the SGPC and the Akal Takht. It was in pursuit of this objective that the Indira Gandhi-Zail Singh combination had initiated the fateful move as far back as in 1979 to unleash the Frankenstein's monster of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale as a counter to the Akalis. Over the years even as it has taken police and military measures against the terrorists it has also relentlessly pursued, except for the brief aberration represented by the Punjab Agreement and the state assembly elections which followed, its goal of destroying the Akalis. In this context alone is it possible to make sense of the government's refusal to implement the Punjab Agreement signed by the prime minister himself or to meet any of the moderate Sikh leadership's demands such as release of the Sikhs incarcerated in Jodhpur since 1984, rehabilitation of Sikh soldiers who had deserted in the wake of Operation Bluestar and punishment of those responsible for the massacre of Sikhs in the country's capital and all over north India after Indira Gandhi's assassination. While government spokesmen never tire of asserting that the problem of terrorism in Punjab cannot be dealt with exclusively through the use of the army and the police, the government's actual policies have been always calculated to dispense with all political bulwarks against the terrorists, leaving essentially only two protagonists in the field: the paramilitary forces and the extremists. The dismissal of the Akali Dal government of Surjit Singh Barnala and the imposition of president's rule in the state marked the culmination of this process.

Against the background of these systematic efforts to dismember the major section of the moderate Sikh leadership it is impossible not to feel queasy at reports that the Punjab unit of the Congress(I) is convening a meeting of various political parties supposedly to evolve a campaign against "separatist forces" in Punjab and that it may even succeed in persuading some at least of the opposition parties to participate in such a so-called campaign.

Burning of Holy Granth in Delhi Condemned

A public meeting held at Guru Nanak Public School Adarash Nagar on Sunday 4 October severely condemned the burning of the holy Guru Granth in the school Gurdwara.

The act of sacrilege was committed on 17 September when some nefarious character threw a lighted missile through the window of the Gurdwara room.

Participating in the meeting Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora and Dr. Maheep Singh president and general secretary Sikh Forum. Jathe dars Charan Singh, and Avtar Singh Hit, S. Ajit Singh all of Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee, Dr. A.S. Narang editor Forum Gazette, representatives of local associations and Singh Sabhas urged upon the authorities to apprehend and punish the culprit without delay. A resolution to this effect was also passed.

The speakers stressed upon the need of maintaining peace and harmony in spite of provocative acts by those who were determined to disturb the peace.



THE
FORUM
GAZETTE

Managing Editor
Amrik Singh
Editors
G.S. Sandhu, A.S. Narang
Circulation
Lt. Col. Manohar Singh (Retd.)

Publishers
Ekta Trust
2/12, Sarva Priya Vihar
New Delhi 110016
Ph. 660738

Business
3-Masgid Road, Jangpura
New Delhi 110014
Ph. 619284.

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- Equality for Women
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Rajeev's Best Friends

In the turbulent political drama that is unfolding in the country one question that one cannot but ask is who are Rajeev Gandhi's best friends and who are his enemies?

Whatever be the other details, one thing is unmistakable. Rajeev Gandhi's best friends are those in the opposition. They oppose him, but they cannot unite in opposition against him. This has been the pattern of the opposition for almost a quarter century and, as far as one can judge, the pattern is not going to change.

Till 1967 when the war with China took place there was hardly any opposition to the Congress rule. Jawaharlal Nehru was the unquestioned leader of India. A few individuals did challenge him but it did not amount to much. After 1962 he lost his authority and for the next five years things were rather uncertain. His last few years were years of decline. Lal Bahadur Shastri's period was too brief for a clear pattern to emerge. Indira Gandhi's ascent to the Prime Ministership of the country in the first few years was marked by a lack of sureness. In a sense those were years of transition.

The 1967 election marked a turning point because a number of opposition parties took over power in the states by forming coalitions amongst themselves. At the Centre, she managed to hold on to power by the skin of her teeth. It is only after she split the Congress and returned to power in her own right that she emerged as a strong political leader. Unfortunately her emergence coincided with the demise of the Congress party as a political party. The party has never recovered from the body blows administered to it during those years.

It should not be necessary to go on with this recital of facts which are known to most people. The important thing to at this stage is that a though a number of people emerged in opposition to her rule they were mere individuals and could not offer a challenge to her. The only man who did offer some kind of a challenge to her was J.P. This in turn led to the imposition of the Emergency and all the followed.

Neither during those eventful days nor in the period since 1980 has the opposition ever been able to present a strong and united challenge to the Congress party. At one time Chaudhary Charan Singh loomed over large on the horizon but a number of people always recognised that he was the biggest obstacle to the unity of the opposition. Indeed the Janata party was wracked partly because of what he did and this disruptive role of his remained unabated as long as he lived.

Chandra Shekhar was another man who emerged as the flag bearer of the opposition. His role over the years however has been equally disruptive. The manner in which he manoeuvred to exclude others and got himself re-elected as the President of the Janata Party is too recent in the memory of people. His role in that sense continues to be one of unashamed egotism. R K Hegde while enjoying a better image is not able to make his impact on the all India scene and the Janata party therefore continues to be almost a voice in the wilderness. To say anything about characters like Bahuguna and others would be to waste attention on people who do not deserve that much attention. The recent emergence of V P Singh filled people with some hope. He has drawn audiences all over the country and touched a vein in the hearts of the people. He has a clean image. Above all, his image means something to the common man who looked for hope and inspiration in other political leaders and failed to find it.

And yet it appears that he too is beginning to flounder. To begin with was his reluctance to come out into the open and deliver a few well chosen blows. It took him some weeks to get over his initial inhibition. Once he got over it, he got trapped himself from that bind.

Is he to go with the Left or with the BJP? The communist parties which never had a foothold in the Hindi speaking belt want to align themselves with V P Singh and make an entry into that feet. The BJP which is already well established in that belt wanted to pre-empt V P Singh and thereby build up a front against Rajeev Gandhi. It has been an unseemly wrangle and there is no knowing how it will resolve itself.

For the sake of record V.P. Singh has said that his natural sympathies lie with the Left. Maybe that is what eventually comes to prevail. In this whole process however a good deal of confusion would have been caused and it would be difficult for his image to remain undamaged.

In theory V P Singh's instinct was right. He wanted to cut across all boundaries of political parties and appeal to the common man. In practice however it does not work so easily. That is why he is feeling somewhat trapped. Another attempt has been made to set up an opposition front where it was proposed to hijack V P Singh. He has refused to be hijacked so far. That part of it is gratifying. But then will he be able to break the existing shackles and set up an altogether new front? It is difficult to say. All that one can say is that one's sympathy goes with him but then what about those 'friends' of Rajeev Gandhi who wish to hijack him to their side. This will not work. The only thing that can work is that these different political parties cease to count in their respective areas or zones of influence and the political activists having become free of their own earlier affiliations switch over to V P Singh. This is too tall an order perhaps but there is nothing else that will help.

SGPC, Akali Dal and Jathedars

(From our special Correspondent)

The key to the understanding of the mess in which the Akalis, and for that matter the Sikhs, have landed themselves lies in the word 'acting.' Everyday one reads in the newspapers these days the high-sounding and holier-than-thou statements made either by the acting Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi or the acting president of the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Mr Harinder Singh. Now the word acting has a dual meaning. One is that a person is acting on behalf of some other office-bearer or holding temporary charge, and the other is that he is playing a part. The tragedy is that most of the Akali leaders, whether of the Barnala or the U.A.D. group, or the SGPC leader are playing both the parts: acting in place of someone as well as playing a part and a game of charade.

No Acting Positions

One can sympathise with them if they were only playing a part but some of them are playing a part bigger than the role assigned to them which is partly responsible for the present crisis. For example, in the whole history of the Sikhs there has never been an acting Jathedar of the Akal Takht nor has there been any jathedar who deserted or 'retreated' from his post. On the other hand, there has been shining examples of the Akal Takht Jathedars who sacrificed their lives to maintain the dignity of the Sikhs' highest seat of religious authority. Nor is there any provision in the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925 for the appointment of an acting jathedar.

The Akal Takht Jathedar and other Jathedars are appointed by the executive committee of the SGPC and for all practical purposes they are employees of SGPC. They get an honorarium from SGPC and can be removed from office by the executive committee. It is indeed ironical that the Akal Takht Jathedar is regarded as the Sikh Pope and is expected to lead the Sikh nation out of the present crisis, yet his tenure of office is at the pleasure of SGPC. The post-1925 history is replete with instances where the ruling faction of the Akali Dal or SGPC has removed the jathedars not to their liking.

Role of SGPC

Coming to the role of SGPC, look at what it is doing. For the last few years it has been playing a game of evasion. The latest example being the declaration by the executive committee after its meeting at Chandigarh on September 12 last in which it challenged to authority of the four high priests to make statements on policy matters and tactical withdrawal a few days later. This tendency to

double-think and double-speak has an Orwellian touch about it.

What about the Akali Dals? The activities of the Barnala group are confined to issuing statements to say that the law and order situation under the Chief Ministership of Mr. Surjit Singh Barnala was better and that the terrorists crime had increased in the President's rule and, therefore, Mr. Barnala should be reinstated as Chief Minister. As for the United Akali Dal no one knows who is its leader, Baba Joginder Singh or Capt. Amrinder Singh? There are factions within a faction. This group too reacts only when the militants act. It does not act on its own nor asserts itself. Some ray of hope was kindled the other day when Mr. Sher Singh Doomcheri President of the Youth Wing, announced at a press conference that a peace march would be organised by Sikhs to Amritsar for the installation of Prof. Darshan Singh as Akal Takht Jathedar before Diwali. A day later Mr. Charanjit Singh Walia, a UAD member of Parliament, told newsmen that the Youth Wing had already been dissolved and the statement of Mr. Doomcheri might be his personal opinion.

The Sane Person

The only sane person in this game of evasion is Prof. Darshan Singh Ragi, though he too is being described by his critics as 'bhagaura' (deserter), who has called upon the Akali Dals to unite and play their role as it was not for him to act on their behalf or play the role assigned to them. Prof. Darshan Singh is right in saying that he could be of use only if the Akali Dal performed its role as his functions as Akal Takht Jathedar are limited and that he could return to Amritsar only if a proper atmosphere was created in the Golden Temple complex first. In other words, he wanted SGPC to do its duty in managing the affairs of the Golden Temple complex.

In this context, it is pertinent to examine what role the priests play in Sikh affairs. The general impression about their role and powers is highly exaggerated. Their actual position is limited to the religious affairs of the Sikhs and they can act only in the limited sphere assigned to them under the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925. It is not generally known

that the Sikhs have five takhts (seats of religious authority), two of which—the Patna Sahib and Hazur Sahib—are outside Punjab. The jathedars of these two takhts have not endorsed the call of the high priests to the Sikhs to join the militants in the "war of liberation." The remaining three takhts—the Akal Takht (first among equals), Keshgarh Sahib and Damdama Sahib—are in Punjab. Since the Jathedars of two takhts outside Punjab do not come to Amritsar, the head granthi of the Golden Temple and the head granthi of the Akal Takht, take their places as surrogates.

Religious Functions

Now these three jathedars are appointed by the executive committee of SGPC, which consists of 160 members, 140 of which are elected and 15 coopted. The five jathedars are the ex officio members. Under the rules framed by SGPC, the functions of jathedars are purely religious. They have to perform religious ceremonies according to the Sikh code of conduct and punish and Sikh who breaks the code. They can also issue "hukamnamas" (edicts) but the wording of the edict must be approved by the general body of SGPC first.

For all practical purposes, the jathedars are employees of SGPC, particularly those in Punjab, and can be removed from office. The recent example is the removal of Jathedar Kirpal Singh of the Akal Takht and Bhal Sahib Singh, head granthi of the Golden Temple. Over the years the powers of the jathedars have been gradually reduced. Initially, they had to right to vote in the election of office-bearers of SGPC but it has taken away later by an amendment to the Act.

In the past, the Sarbat Khalsa (Congregation of Sikhs), used to appoint the Akal Takht jathedar as no system of election prevailed then. The jathedars enjoyed much more powers then. Now their powers have been curtailed mainly because the political bosses of the Akali Dal use them for their narrow political ends.

Political Interference

The consequences of this political interference in the religious affairs of the Sikhs by the Akali leaders is there for everyone to see.

Continued on page 4

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R.S.S. Congress (I) Alliance

Continued from page 1

stand on the issue of Ram Janam Bhoomi, the ties between it and the RSS are said to have become still closer. In the Jammu and Kashmir assembly poll, RSS cadres are understood to have worked shoulder-to-shoulder with Congress (I) workers.

Interestingly, the AICC (I) committee on communalism, headed by former Punjab chief minister Darbara Singh, has recommended that the Congress (I) should sever all relations with communal outfits

like the RSS.

While the report of the Darbara committee appears to have been shelved by the party high command, it has appointed yet another committee, headed by N C Chaturvedi, to go into the same issue. Given Chaturvedi's strong feelings about the Hindu cause, as is evident from his record in Parliament, observers feel that the new committee's recommendations might be quite different from those of the Darbara committee.

Devi Lal's Relatives

(Continued from page 1)

remain silent. One does not know how many more mouths remain thereto be shut down.

Rootless Christians

Another justification Ch. Devi Lal has is that only people from once family, cast, community or clan can be trusted for others are rootless especially those belonging to minorities. Ch. Devi Lal said "I always like good and dependable people around me, not like Rajiv Gandhi who picked on a rootless man like Arun Singh whose father became a Christian". Though on newsmen's reaction to this statement Ch. Devi Lal clarified that he did not mean to make a sweeping remark on the minorities, his message for democracy and secularism is clear.

His preference in terms of secular values becomes more clear in view of his hobnobbing with Tantriks and claimed godmen. According to press reports Devi Lal had sought blessings of Chandra Swami the controversial high-flying godman alleged to be involved in various FERA irregularities. He is reported to have had a holy dip in the Brhama Sarovar under Swami's grace during Solar eclipse. Chandra Swami on his visit to Kurukshetra stayed at a government guest house and told reporters that he had been invited by VIPs who

sought his blessings. According to press reports the Swami has also started a Yajna at Kurukshetra. Of course like any politician Ch. Devi Lal has also denied having taken blessings from Chandra Swami but the facts speak for them selves.

Power Politics

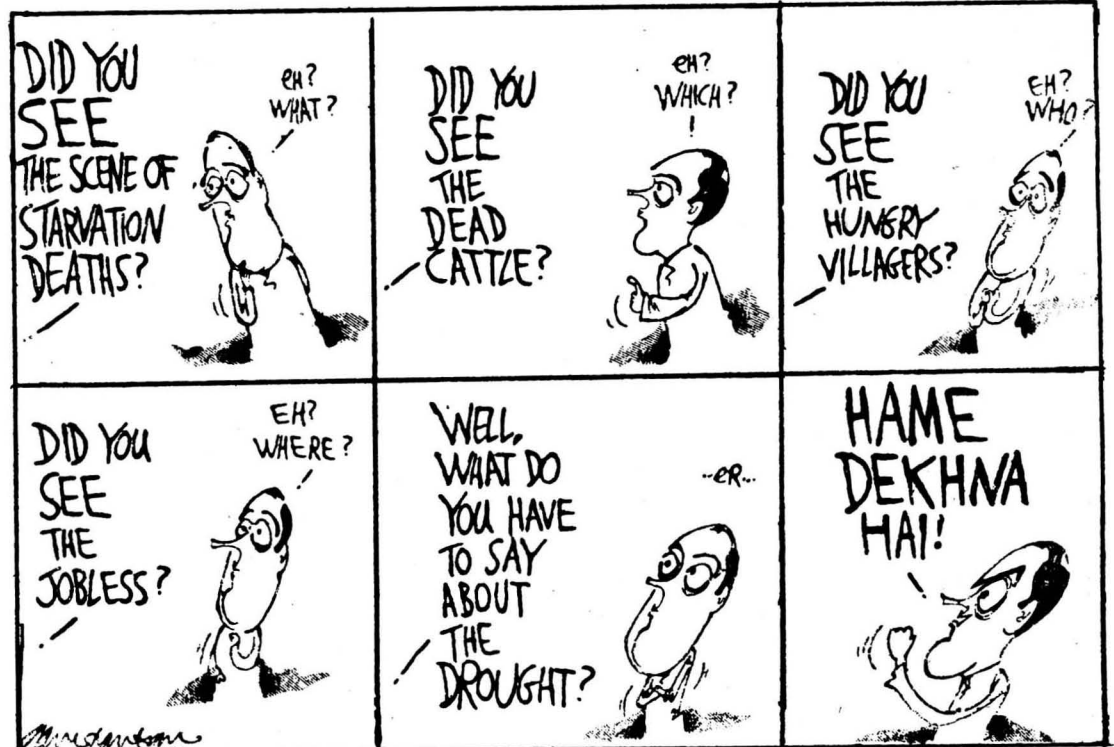
All this speaks of the prevailing politics in our society. The pace of events at all levels, may it be at centre or in the states, is being set by small time local politicians, petty operators, and manipulators. All types of leaders have become involved in desperate struggle for power and domination.

This has generated a vicious circle of competition between those in power and those out of it. We have a set of leaders at various levels who have taken to politics not to serve the people and the country but as an instrument for power.

As a result the government has been losing a good deal of its authority to the hoodlum, the organised criminals, the gangsters and the terrorists. Befet of participation in their own government, the people have increasingly to express their discontent with the system restoring to protest demonstrations which in turn are suppressed making naked use of the force.

"I always like good and dependable people around me, not like Rajiv Gandhi who picked on a rootless man like Arun Singh whose father became a Christian". Though on newsmen's reaction to this statement Ch. Devi Lal clarified that he did not mean to make a sweeping remark on the minorities, his message for democracy and secularism is clear.

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Courtesy Indian Express

Akali Dal and SGPC

Continued from page 3

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Things have come to such a pass that the management of gurdwaras is now mainly in the hands of the militants. It is, therefore, not the jathedars who are to be blamed so much as the SGPC management. The Akal Takht Jathedar can abdicate his

authority but not SGPC which should have appointed another jathedar in place of Prof Darshan Singh once he vacated the post and created a vacuum. But the tragedy is that the SGPC President and other office-bearers are at the mercy of the militants.

But why blame SGPC alone. After all, it is a representative body of the Sikhs. What are the Sikhs doing as a whole of individually to meet the challenge of the militants. Under Article 142 of the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925, any person interested in a notified Sikh gurdwara can complain in writing to the Judicial Commission appointed under Article 70 of the Act against mismanagement of that gurdwara. The Golden Temple is under the direct control of SGPC. No Sikh has gone to the Judicial Commission so far to complain against SGPC.

संचेतना

संचेतना उपहार
में दीजिए इससे
उनके पास प्रति
मास आपकी
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The shell was nothing, leave
it there;
The pearl-the soul-was all,
is here.

From : In Tune with the
Infinite by Ralph
Waldo Trine

SECULARISM & DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

As an homage to late Sh. Romesh Thapar, The Forum Gazette organised a seminar on Secularism and Democracy in India in the 1980s. The key-note speakers were Dr. Ravinder Kumar, Director, Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; Dr. Bhikhu Parekh ex-Vice-Chancellor, Baroda University and an internationally recognized political theorist; and S. Patwant Singh well-known author and the Editor of 'Design' Bombay. SH. Rajni Kothari leading theorist of democracy in India presided over the seminar. A brief report.

Dr. Amrik Singh, Editor, The Forum Gazette welcomed the participants and speakers. He remarked that the most abiding interest of late Sh. Romesh Thapar had been democracy and secularism in India. The monthly magazine 'Seminar' which Romesh Thapar edited brought out different aspects of the Indian democratic experiment as it carried over decades. It was, therefore, a fitting tribute to late Sh. Romesh Thapar and Smt. Raj Thapar to attend to democracy and secularism with a renewed interest.

Dr. Ravinder Kumar, an historian by vocation, struck the principal note as he proceeded from the premise that in the Indian context the concepts of democracy and secularism coalesce into one another. One without the other remain a mere sham. In practice we come across conceptions of democracy with different affiliations. Three strands of the democratic experiment must be grasped before we can make a studied choice and policy from these concepts. Three principal concepts of democracy may be termed as: The Liberal, The Sarvodaya concept and Radical Democracy. After detailing these conceptions, he proceeded to argue that in India political activity started with the first conception i.e. Liberal democracy. We borrowed the ready-made conceptual schema of the Western liberal democracy. Representative

institutions are central to this concept of democracy. We adopted these institutions. To an extent we accepted the moral vision of the nineteenth century liberalism. This vision saw no problems in a citizen rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and rendering unto God what is due to Him. In our country, however, we have run into difficulties because the citizen and the political activist fails to keep this separation in practice as well as in theory. Hence all the knots and jumbles which confound us in India.



Prof. Rajni Kothari

To an extent Gandhi had anticipated this problem. He had therefore leaned towards the Sarvodaya concept of democracy. He visualised a disaggregated society sustained by citizen participation along with all the psychic wherewithal of the participant. Gandhi knew well that religion and religious sensibility is central to Indian action.

Sarvodaya view is ambiguous in its nature. It mixed morals and market to a degree which

creates problems as yet neither fully articulated nor resolved by us. Yet it remains true that without this resolution we will not succeed in marching forward along with the teeming millions of this sub-continent.

The third option i.e. Radical democracy rejects both the notion of property and God. We have not done that either. Hence the state of indeterminacy. Prof. Kumar emphasised the often neglected truth that India's democratic experiment is unique kind of experiment in human history and mankind will learn new lessons from this experiment.

The difficulties of today arise from the choices made in the 1920s. The leaders at that time did not choose the kind of solidarities appropriate to our society. They revealed in not making a choice on these issues. This created the kind of tensions we witness today.

Fortunately we the inhabitants of this multinational subcontinent do not have a Church as the medieval Europe had. It is therefore possible to workout methods whereby it will be possible for the citizens to render unto the state what belong to the state and to render unto the community which belongs to the community. This is a precondition for our onward march towards industrialization and development.

Dr. Parekh made it clear to the audience that secularism in Europe arose from the movement commonly known as Enlightenment in the history of Europe. This rationalist movement made the European political actors choose the secular values in the interest of advancement of civilization. The choice paid handsome dividend to the European nations.

We in India have yet to make choice clearly. We must settle on the kind of values which the

state is to implement in our complex society. We have to decide what we want to do with our future and our destiny. We have to make the majority and the minorities in the country work together willingly and constructively.



Parekh was of the opinion that some decisions were made in the first quarter of the 20th century. For a while the leaders tended to accept the theory that India was to be a Hindu country. However the leaders soon realised that it will mean constant social strife. The leaders changed direction and accepted the concept of a secular India. Still that wrong posture once thrown up gave fillip to divisive communal politics.

Instead to Hinduising India we have to Indianise the Hindus. India is a constantly expanding tradition. Variety of creeds have contributed to its richness and they will continue to do so if given the right kind of political and social milieu. The composition of a composite India is as yet an incomplete achievement. We have to work hard to make it a reality out of a vision. This is the only kind of secularism which will suit India.

S. Patwant Singh poignantly recounted how Raj Thapar narrated to her physician in England the cruellest trauma of her life. She told her doctor that the scenes of some human beings being burnt alive and others standing cheering and jeering was her trauma in November 1984. She fell victim to cancerous growth after that. Patwant Singh paid glowing tributes to the Thapars and suggested that a well-provided foundation should be set up to keep their legacy alive and vibrant.

Singh also narrated how Romesh Thapar was denied access to the Door-darshan after he criticized the government for its failure to protect the life and liberty to those citizens who practiced the Sikh faith. This is what we do to our men of integrity, he remarked.

Singh exposed thoroughly the hollowness of the governments claims about secularism, democracy and equality before the laws. The performance of the Mishra commission was a crying shame.

He spoke highly of the voluntary societies who helped

the victims of violence in 1984 and said that but for men of vision like Rajni Kothari the events of 1984 November would have triggered massive exchange of population between Punjab and the rest of India. Such people are the only hope for secularism and democracy in India.

Carrying forward the discussion Arif Ali and S. Ahal Singh gave a detailed account of the hardship and humiliation doled out to those who want to seek justice and redressal of wrongs done to them at different points of time. Arif Ali narrated the woes of the Mizos and Nagas as minorities. S. Ahal Singh brought to light the intimidation and chicanery which deters the widows of 1984 to seek justice in the courts of law.

Dr. Amrik Singh pointed out that the present rulers have incorporated communalism into their political line of action.

Nirmal Mukharji pointed out the dangerous growth of political communalism. He thought that advance of democracy threatens the power and prosperity of the existing have-gots. They communalise things to build defences against possible attack on their power and position.

Dr. Narinder Singh from Nehru university attributed communalism to the choice of strategy of development in India. He suggested that people-oriented development instead of project-oriented development will show the way out to present day communalised politics.

Prof. A.K. Ray proposed a general theory of post-Colonial democracies.

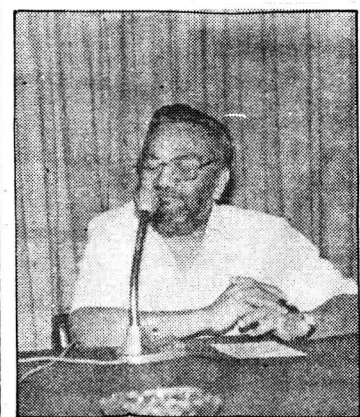
Rajni Kothari, in his concluding remarks, insisted that the only way out of the present communalised politics is to build a really democratic and equalitarian society. So long as we keep on pinning all our hopes on the state we will continue to feel frustrated. The promises of the independence struggle can be realized only through a democratic society over and above the state.



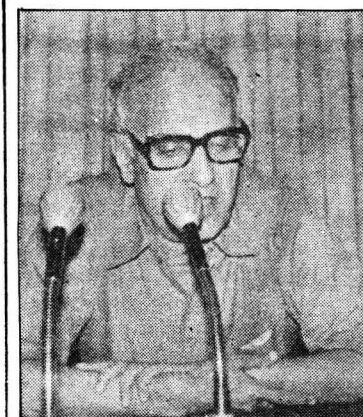
S. Patwant Singh



Prof. Nirmal Mukerjee



Prof. Bhikhu Parekh



Prof. Ravinder Kumar



Prof. Ashwani Ray

Malady and Remedy Poverty in India

N.L. Madan

India's poverty has been a subject of considerable interest ever since the days of Dadabhai Naoroji. After independence the avowed goal of Congress policies has been to improve the levels of living of the vast majority of the people in the country, who have remained too poor for long. The existence of poverty in the country was well understood even in early years of planning, but the Congress party in 1971 parliamentary elections showed keen interest in locating key pockets of the poor people and removing their hardships. 'Garibi Hatao' or Eradicate Poverty was the radical promise on the basis of which Congress regained its credibility in 1971 elections.

conditioning process, wherein the poor can realize it and not explain it. Even then in material terms, its concept depends on the minimum standard of living adopted by a community at a given time. Minimum standard of living refers to minimum material resources like food, clothing and shelter. It may in addition include some other elements considered essential by the society to ensure maximum participation of each individual in community life. In simple terms, poverty in Indian context refers to a situation wherein the income of a family is insufficient to secure the minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely "physical efficiency".

possibilities for privacy, child labour, ruinous forms of escapism such as alcoholism, drugs etc."

Poverty line in India

The concept of the poverty line was first conceived in India at the Indian Labour Conference in 1957 and was introduced in the third Five Year Plan. A working group of the Planning Commission suggested in 1962 that those with a per capita monthly expenditure of Rs. 20 (at 1960-61 price level) should be defined as poor. But this method was not incorporated in the fourth and fifth plans, which only talked of improving the consumption level of the bottom 30 per cent. It was only in the sixth plan that the parameter of poverty was defined and its methodology was appended in the technical note of the plan document.

The report published in 1979 defined the poverty line as the mid point of a monthly per capita expenditure of a class having a daily caloric intake of 2,435 per person in rural areas and 2,095 caloric per person in urban areas which worked out to Rs. 76 in rural areas and Rs. 88 in urban areas at 1979-80 prices. Those spending less than these sums were declared poor. In fact some unofficial studies by Dandekar and Rath were earlier conducted in early seventies and framed out the same issues, which were later officially adopted by the Planning Commission. Worked out on these basis, it was estimated that 49 million persons in urban areas and 166.4 million persons in rural areas were living below poverty line in 1967-68. Even in the best agricultural year of 1977-78, as much as 40 per cent of the total population, or 20 crore people in rural areas and 6 crore in urban areas suffered from absolute poverty i.e. about the total population of Europe.

Even the Planning Commission has admitted the frightening conditions of poverty in the country. According to Seventh Plan document an estimated 51 per cent of the population of the country was below the poverty line. The government expected this to fall to 37 per cent in the terminal year of the Sixth plan and it expects the rate to fall further to 23 per cent by the end of the Seventh plan thus more than halving the poverty line within 10 years. This is part of a long term aim to cut the poverty rate to 10 per cent by the end of Eighth plan i.e. 1990-95.

The available literature on poverty in India concerns the number of poor people below the poverty line and this information fails to reflect the intensity of poverty suffered by the poor. Planning Commission has accepted minimum consumption level as the basis of poverty line. The problem, as has been understood by the

planners is in terms of numbers, that is how many people are poor in the country, not how poor are the poor. Sometimes it is more difficult to measure variations of poverty in different regions of the country due to regional diversities.

But this is a glaring fact that there are too many persons, particularly in rural areas, who are continuously leading life of misery and poverty. Poverty, in fact, has stunned this section of society into a state of perpetual helplessness and they suffer quietly, they belong to those families, which have lived in poverty from generations to generations, only death ending their poverty.

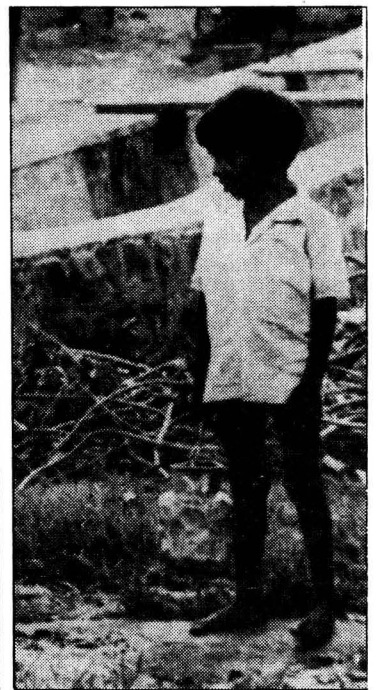
Governmental Efforts

Several schemes of loan-cum-subsidy have been implemented by the government in the last few years to eradicate or mitigate poverty. Earlier two schemes were known as Small Farmers Development Agencies (SFDAs) and Programmes for marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers (MFALs). Subsidized supply of inputs, dairy development activities, specially subsidized purchases of buffaloes and cottage industries etc. were some of the features of these programmes.

A little earlier than the Sixth Plan period, various programmes were brought together under one programme, known as

Economic backwardness and inequality are the twin causes of poverty. One cannot underplay the other. Economists are now fully convinced that the problem of poverty cannot be overcome by efforts in any one single direction. Only a broad based policy, that attacks poverty on all fronts, political, economic, social and cultural can help solve the problem of poverty. The egalitarian control over the means of production, the spirited genuine revival of massive participation in the developmental-distribution process and adoption of the principle of democratic decentralisation can alleviate this malady.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). This programme aimed at increasing the income generation capacity of the beneficiary families in such a way that they were brought above the poverty line. This programme was followed by National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). Huge amounts had been allocated for the implementation of these programmes in the Sixth plan and now in the Seventh plan. The government claimed that these programmes worked well and in 1984 alone 40 per cent of the recipients managed to increase their income above Rs. 3,500 a year the 1979-80 poverty line per family. This claim has been refuted by many senior economists like Dr Nilkanth Rath, a pioneer in poverty studies, because the calculations were made on the current prices without adjustment for inflation since 1979-80.



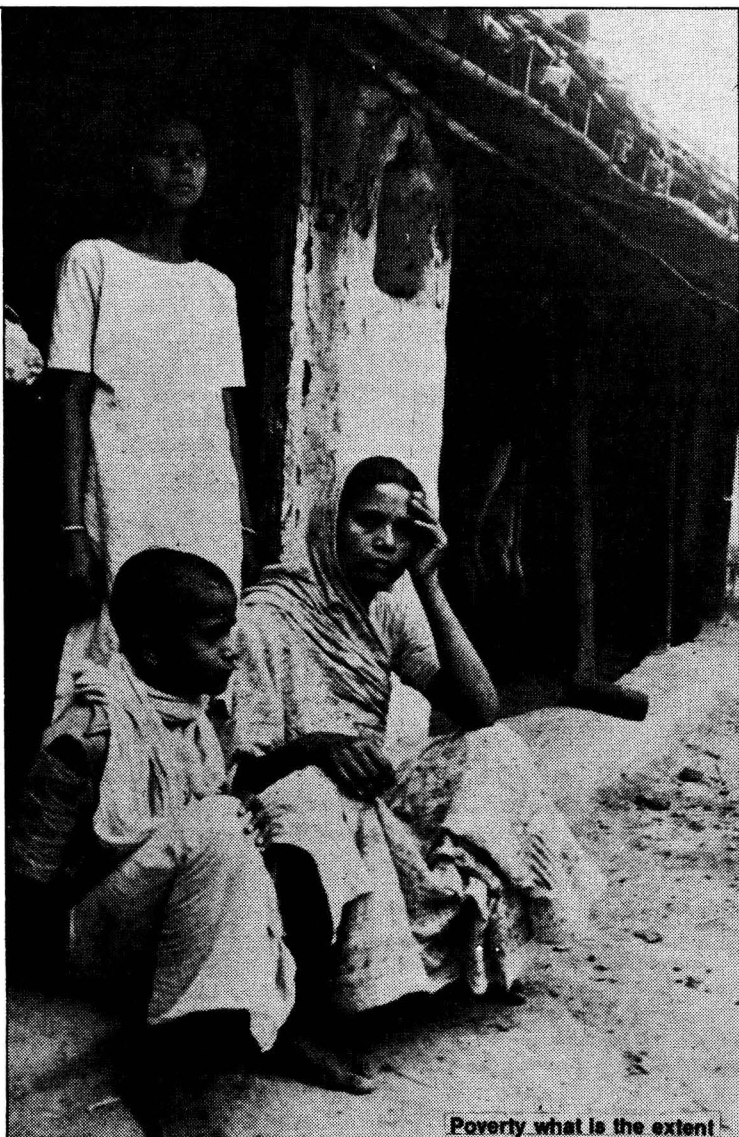
The Basic Error

Political leadership and planners have committed a basic error by categorising poverty in terms of calories. With the help of smart statistics, the planners have tried to define poverty, codify it and suggest measures to alleviate it. There is some serious defect in the whole approach to the question of poverty, the strategy of removal of poverty is full of contradictions. Even after forty years of independence and so much talk of poverty, no serious study has yet been conducted to know the basic reasons of poverty. Ajit Roy is of the opinion that it is necessary to study (a) the social conditions giving birth to this phenomenon, (b) the social conditions necessary for eradicating the phenomenon, and (c) pre-requisites of a successful social effort for creating the conditions

Estimation of poverty

Precise counting of the poor is not possible, as their specific identification in rural and urban areas of the country is not feasible, since (a) there is no universally accepted definition of poverty, (b) the data on the subject is scanty and fragmentary. Poverty is a relative term. It is a situation, a phenomenon, a state of helplessness, a

There are in a way three ingredients, the level of income in money terms, the minimum subsistence level, and the physical efficiency. Peter Townsend has defined poverty, as a system, especially in developing countries, which includes a continuous fight for survival, unemployment, low wages, unskilled labour, absence of food supplies, insufficient



Poverty what is the extent

necessary for the eradication of the phenomenon.

Social and economic structure in India, the foundations of which were laid by the Britishers and has been strengthened after independence is essentially capitalistic. Poverty is an essential outcome of that very structure. When poverty is the product of capitalistic structure, how can this be eradicated till this structure is intact. Poverty is the only possible outcome of such an economic system.

The very people entrusted with the task of removal of poverty are responsible for creating the conditions of poverty. They control the means of production. They live in luxury. They handle economy. They have political power. They are socially powerful. The very leaders and economists propounding high sounding theories have little knowledge of the conditions of poverty.

Continued on page 12

Two Roles of Working Women

Dr. Promilla Kapur

But has the fact of a working women's taking upon themselves the additional role of a working person made any difference in their traditional role of a wife, mother and housewife? has any link between their two major roles been established by lessening the work load of their previous and well-established role of a house wife-mother, which had many roles in One? Does the added working women's role which provides these women with economic Independence, freedom of movement and individual status place them in enviable position?

The whole Nation is celebrating forty years of India's Independence and reviewing the triumphs and achievements as also the failures and tragedies of the last four decades of Independence. But it is rather surprising that in most of the seminars and lectures, the working women figured no where in the discussion about the triumphs and failures of post-Independent era.

On examining the situation of working women, one finds that in our country women's working outside their homes and earning money is not altogether a new phenomenon. It is the taking up of out-of-home salaried jobs and of entering into various professions by the educated girls and more so by the educated wives and mothers of urban middle class families which is comparatively a new thing. But it is their increasingly getting into occupations and professions which were always the preserves of men and which were supposed to be "unsuitable" for, as well as "beyond the capabilities" of women which is a post-Independence phenomenon. Its emergence has been the result of the socio politico-economic changes that have been occurring in our country particularly after Independence.

This new class of working women whose emergence may be considered as one of the triumphs of Independent India has emerged in many phases. At the beginning of the phase the educated women were supposed to take up occupations and professions which were considered "respectable" for them like that of a teacher and later that of a doctor as well. Working in the Offices or Shops by the side of men specially as clerks was looked down upon. It is only numbers to serve in the Offices and Shops, and started being accepted, though not very happily by the society.

Even at this stage educated women had to choose between career and marriage, mainly because the combination of the two was not considered practicable and desirable. Even upto mid 1950s in some Government Services like the IFS only unmarried women were allowed, and women IFS officers had to resign if they decided to marry. Till recently Air-hostesses had to resign on getting married and later on getting children.

Career and Marriage

But in the latest phase, the question of either job/profession or marriage has been abandoned and a combination of the two has become more common. This is strongly indicated by the observations made by the scholars and by working women in which very high percentage (95 per cent) reported that they were combining job/profession with marriage or would like to combine the two. This new situation has been affected by and is affecting the changing attitudes of working women, men and of society towards women's and more so towards married women's employment and roles. Now the husbands and even the members of old generation approve or do not mind the wives and daughters-in-law to be in jobs or professions though by and large because of the economic gains to the family.

The majority of working women of Free India still continue to be teachers and doctors, but many others have been entering (increasing numbers) into various kinds of unusual occupations and professions that were almost reserved for men like those of an Engineer, Architect, Chartered Accountant, Judges and Police Officers. It is only in the fighting forces that women are not yet allowed to enter.

Despite all these changes, the trends of the occupational placement pattern of educated women clearly indicate that it has not changed radically and these women continue to be concentrated in low-paid and less-prestigious occupations. Yet a significant change that has taken place recently in the post Independence era has been that in spite of all the disparities and discriminations that these working women have to face at every stage of their occupational life, right from the stage of entrance into it onwards, they are now not only tolerated and accepted but are even more respected than before, by themselves and by the society for their occupational and professional achievements and positions. These women are developing more self-confidence.

But has the fact of a working women's taking upon themselves the additional role of a working person made any difference in their traditional role of a wife, mother and housewife? has any link between their two major roles

been established by lessening the work load of their previous and well-established role of a house wife-mother, which had many roles in One? Does the added working women's role which provides these women with economic Independence, freedom of movement and individual status place them in enviable position?

Additional Loads

On examining the observations made by the scholars, researchers and journalists, and by going through the experiences and life pattern of the working women, one can say with considerable amount of certainty that working women's taking up a new role has added to a great extent her work-load. This has been so mainly because by and large the corresponding adjustments or changes that ought to have taken place in the working women's home-life style and in the pattern of their duties and responsibilities connected with the running of household have not yet been brought about.

frequent poor health of children and of themselves mainly owing to the overload of double work of job and home, lack of adjustments made by themselves by the husband and in-laws, unhelpful behaviour of neighbours and relatives, lack of adequate supports services, calous and prejudiced attitude and behaviour of non-working women towards them and above all shortage of time which is felt also because of lack of training in systematic way of working.

Torn Between Two Roles

The working wives are thus torn between their two major roles and occupations-marriage and work. Since both these roles are equally demanding and important and the working women, even while holding very responsible posts continue to be made over-conscious of their exclusive duties and obligations towards their husbands, children and home they suffer from facing conflict

Thus working women particularly in India have to fulfil not only two-roles but multiple roles in the midst of rather uncongenial environment. They have to face frequent poor health of children and of themselves mainly owing to the overload of double work of job and home, lack of adjustments made by themselves by the husband and in-laws, unhelpful behaviour of neighbours and relatives, lack of adequate supports services, calous and prejudiced attitude and behaviour of non-working women towards them and above all shortage of time which is felt also because of lack of training in systematic way of working.

The new situation has not only added extra duties and responsibilities of work-role for the working women, but had also increased the work-load connected with working after the home, husband and children. Now the educated economically independent wife and mother is expected to also attend to the out-of-home errands like taking the child to the school for admission, getting child's homework done, taking him or her to the doctor when unwell ringing for and getting the Gas, calling the plumber or electrician and getting the faults repaired, doing the shopping going to the bank, post-office or to, other offices to carry out the odd jobs. These jobs used to be and even now are being carried out by the men of the non-working women's families.

Thus working women particularly in India have to fulfil not only two-roles but multiple roles in the midst of rather uncongenial environment. They have to face between their roles. The inner conflict and guilt feeling are experienced by them particularly if and in those cases in which they are either keen or are made to play both their roles very efficiently and are either desires or demanded to pay equal attention to their demanding home life and too absorbing job or profession.

The stresses and strains are felt not simply because of the arithmetical increase in the number of tasks to be performed but also because of the psychic strain and tension created by the contradictory role-expectations from a working wife while she is at work and at home. In the continuing traditional family-structure in India, the attainment of the goal of marriage and family and maintaining it requires self-negation and cooperation and she is expected to be non-assertive, submissive, dependent, obedient and very efficient in the traditional role of wife, mother and daughter-in-law. But at the same time in the achievement of the goal of being a successful working woman she requires self-enhancement and competition and is expected to be assertive, independent and confident. These contradictory expectations cause a lot of confusion and tension and create problems for them in the profession as well as at home. The confusion and workload is increased in cases where the attitude and behaviour of husband and in-laws are uncooperative with regard to sharing of the household work.

No Change in Attitudes

The problems and strains are created also where there is the lag in the

change in the attitudes and behaviour of working women and those of the men and of society as a whole towards the roles, status, duties and responsibilities of the husband and wife within and outside the family. This lag is created because owing to the additional role of a working women that the educated women take up, their ways of thinking and feeling towards themselves, their lives and towards their husband's rights and duties have undergone change much more rapidly and in many more directions than those of their husbands and parents-in-law.

the marital and family tension and break up takes place more in these homes where the working wife becomes less tolerant, less patient, less adjustable and more demanding and rather vain of her economic independence, and the husband and other family members do not understand and tolerate that.

Thus the problems and the heavy physical, mental and emotional stresses and strains that the educated working wives and mothers face have made their lives far from being enviable.

No doubt a lot has been done and is being done in the last one decade and half by the government, voluntary organizations and women activists to ameliorate the difficulties and solve the problems of working women and to involve women in the development programmes. Yet it all seem to be just the beginning. Much more needs to be done if both men and women have to equally share the pleasant privileges and obligations of collaboratively carrying out the task of bringing about and maintaining their own and family's happiness, health and harmony and nation's development, real progress and peace.



Entering New Fields.



A drawing of Sati made some time, before 1829 when Sati was abolished.

Among primitive peoples of many lands there was a belief that life after death is more or less a continuation of the present life and subject to the same material needs. A man needs his wife and attendants in the next world. So the death of a chief was followed by immolation (voluntary or forcible) of his wife, concubines and attendants. The custom prevailed in India, China, Babylonia and many other countries. The Hara-Kiri of some Japanese subjects on the death of a king is a version of the same practice.

The burning of wife is one aspect of the last remnant of this widely spread primitive custom. It was prevalent in India in the very early period of history. Greek writers have preserved detailed accounts of a case that occurred in the fourth century B.C. Strabo the ancient geographer relates that the Greeks under Alexander found Sati practiced among the Khatri in the Panjab. The Greek accounts refer to the widow of an Indian commander "who departed to the pyre crowned with fillets by her women, and decked out splendidly as for a wedding!"

In the Mahabharata there are several references to Sati. All those who perform this rite were Kshatri princesses. Several texts forbade Sati by Brahmana women.

Sati was not enjoined as sacred religious duty in the early law-books of India. The Rig Veda does not sanction it. The two lines of Rig-Veda used by latter generations to justify the practice of Sati was proven forgeries written upon the originals by the great scholar Maxmuler in 1881. The passage in dispute is X-18.7 of the Rig-Veda. It lays down: after the cremation is complete, let those whose husbands are worthy and are living enter the house with ghee applied as collyrium to their eyes. Let these wives first step into the house, tearless, without any affliction, and well adorned.

This verse was employed for the procedure for Sati by medieval writers who substituted the word 'agnesh' for 'agre'. Commenting on this mutilation of the text Max Muler writes, "This is perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood. Here have been thousands and

Sati: A Baleful Lega

The Kings Who Banned Sati

The opposition to the cruel and inhuman custom of Sati is as old as the practice itself. The first authoritative text of Bharat desh the Rig-veda has passages which attest opposition to this practice. Passage no X-18.7, after due distortions, was used in the middle ages to justify Sati. The next passage X-17.8 reads as under: "O, wife of the dead raise yourself up towards the world of the living." This verse possibly contains an invitation to the widow to either marry her late husband's brother or go in for Niyoga if he had died son-less. The practice of marrying the brother of late husband has been as old as the practice of Sati. In the Mahabharata this is mentioned as a practice typical of the Panjab and the Jammu hill areas. This kind of second marriage is attested to by the contemporary writers as prevailing in non-brahman Maharashtra of the middle ages. The Jats as an ethnic unit are common practioners of this widow remarriage.

Right in the Rig-veda we come across rituals proper to the occasion of a widows rising from the pyre of her husband. The veda lays down that on such occasion the brother, or the son, or the pupil of the late husband will coax the widow to leave the pyre which she sits on in grief. While performing this consoling deed he will utter the mantra: O wife raise yourself up towards the world of the living.

The first sovereign on record against the Sati rite is Harsha (Assassinated 647 A.D.) of north India. He rescued his

sister from the voluntary self-immolation at the pyre of her husband and shared his throne with her on public occasions.



Emperor Akbar

Gulbadan one of the daughters of emperor Babur in her memoirs speaks of Sati in times of Akbar had asked had asked Bairam Khan when a besieged Rajput fort had at last surrendered and the young prince suddenly saw huge fires flaming, not without but inside the walls. 'That is the Jauhar' Bairam had answered and added calmly, 'it is customary' Customary but horrific, the rite of immolation by burning of the wives, women and children of the defeated Raja before he and his men came out to be massacred themselves....that a wife, by honour and tradition, was bound to throw herself on the pyre and be burnt with the corpse was barbarous. Sometimes it was not one wife, but all wives and concubines, even child ones who were forced onto the pyre. The gateways of some of the old Hindu palaces have poignant little hand prints made in

vermillion, perhaps in protest on the last march of these innocents to the flames."

Gulbadan continues, "Akbar put an end to this, making it unlawful. When his order was defied and the wife of one of the rajas was actually being dragged to her death, royal troops rescued her and Akbar took her under her own protection."

Aurangzeb (1618-1707) perhaps the most reviled of the Timurid emporors of India banned the burning of widows. A royal order dated December 1663 specifically forbids Sati. But the evidence of contemporary European travellers in India shows that the royal prohibition was often violated.



Aurangzeb

From the early days of the British rule both officials and missionaries appealed to the government to stop baleful

custom. The liberal opinion in England set afoot an agitation to force the hand of the authorities in this matter.

The Dutch and the Danes prohibited Sati in their territories like Chinsura, Serampur and Chandernagore.



Raja Ram Mohan Roy

In 1789 (the year of the French revolution) a collector in Bengal wrote to his government, "practice at which human nature shudders, I will not permit without specific instructions from the government to that effect." Numerous other officers persuaded the government to ban the inhuman custom of Sati. As a result the Regulations of 1812 and 1817 made it a criminal offence to force Sati on other person.

The politicians did not sit idle after this legislation. An agitation against the ban was stoked up. Raja Ram Mohan Roy stood for the abolition of Sati. He wrote all these instances (of Sati) are murder according to every Shastra as well as the common sense of all the nations.

William Bentinck issued the Regulation XXVII dated 4th December 1829 and declared Sati illegal and punishable by the courts of law. People encouraging Sati were to be

treated as criminals. The legal wrangle went upto the Privy council and was decided against this barbarous custom.

S. Khushwant Singh gives an interesting account of the abolition of Sati in the Panjab. After the annexation of Panjab John Lawrence came across the custom of Sati. He decided to put it down in the manner he thought most effective. Since

The Comm

The Forum Gazette conducted an extensive survey of reaction of educated women to the latest instance of Sati on 4th Sep. 1987 at Deorala in Rajsathan. Given below are some selections from that survey.

Mrs. Mohinder Kaur Gill is an outstanding scholar of Sikh scriptures, Punjabi literature and history, in addition to being an author of several books. She is Principal Mata Sundri College, University of Delhi.

Mrs Gill started with a dig. Have you come to ask me whether to be a Sati or not? My dear friend it is a remnant of barbarous times when women was deemed as no more than a thing. A creature totally dependent on the husband. The death of the husband spelt the end of meaningful life. We are no more living in that kind of circumstances.

Sati is intolerable cruelty to women in a society which is otherwise not too famous for social and political justices. Only God almighty knows when our law and enforcement will live upto the expectations of the liberal and socialist

Sati Through the Ages

thousands lives sacrificed on the authority of a passage which was mangled, mistranslated and misapplied."

Ramayana

In the Ramayana the death and cremation of Maharaja Dashratha is not accompanied by Sati of any one of his three queens. Nor are other heroes falling in battle followed by Sati of their women folk.

Manu and other early Dharmasatras are silent about Sati. The opinion swings in favour of Sati near the end of the ancient times i.e., 9th to 11th century A.D. For the first time we come across the sanction in Vishnu Dharmasastra which says, "On her husband's death the widow should ascend the funeral pyre after him". Medhanithi and Mitakshar were composed near the end of the ancient period. Both approve of Sati. Historians writing about the conditions under Guptas and their successors incline to believe that the custom of

burning widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands was coming into "general use", at least among the ruling clans.

Of male Sati

In the first decade of the 11th century Mahmud Gaznavi routed Jaipal the king of Lahore in the battle of Attock. He robbed Jaipal and fifteen of his kinsfolk of their precious belongings and then set them free. "With the proud despair of this race Jaipal refused to survive his disgrace. Preferring death to dishonour, he cast himself upon a funeral pyre."

K.R. Malkani has brought to public light a case of a male Sati for love. He writes, I know of at least one such case in history. Luai was a descendent of Prophet Mohammed. He and his wife, Hind, had a son, Asim. This Arab family settled down in Samarra in Sindh. Here Hind repaired the local Hindu temple. Asim fell in love with Sita, the daughter of the temple priest. But Luai would not consent to Asim becoming Hindu—and the priest would not

agree to Sita becoming Muslim. At last Hind took Asim and Sita to Saniyya (now Sann, the native village of the prominent Sindh leader, G.M. Syed). There they were married, while keeping their respective religions. When Sita died a few years later, Asim immolated himself on her funeral pyre!

The Middle Ages

Amir Khusro (1301) giving an account of the capture of Ranthambhor by Allaudin Khilji writes, "One night the Rai (Hamir Dev) lit a fire at the top of the hill and threw his women family into the flames, and, rushing on the enemy with a few devoted adherents they wsacrificed their lives". A similar kind of

immolation is narrated about Padmini of fort Chittor the Sisodia stronghold in Rajputana.

The rite of Sati or women burning themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands, was very common in Vijay nagar (South India) and the Brahmans freely sanctioned it at that time.

Writing about the conditions under the Turko-Afghan rulers of India, Ibn Batuta writes, "the practice of Sati was widely prevalent." This appears to the true of certain classes in society. Ibn Batuta confirms that some kind of a permit had to be procured from the Sultan of Delhi before burning of a widow. It appears that some Muslims aristocrats of Hindu origin or living in Hindu environment assimilated the Hindu custom of Sati and Jauhar.

Inspite of non-approval from Islam and specific interdictions by the rulers from time to time Sati continued to be practiced in India. When Ram Mohan Roy opposed it and William Bentinck banned it Sati incidents around Calcutta claimed about five hundred lives a year. Extrapolated on to an all India level it totalled into a staggering figure. In Punjab the instances of Sati are associated with the cremation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Many ladies perished on his pyre, the most distinguished among them being the Rajput rani from Kangra.

Soon after the annexation of Panjab, John Lawrence the Commissioner of Jalandhar Doab came across the practice of Sati among the Sikh zamindars of the ilaqa. He suppressed the practice with a firm hand.

cy G.S. Sandhu

leases of land had to be renewed he made every Sardar who sought the renewal make three vows on the Granth Sahib: I will not burn a widow; I will not kill female child; and I will not kill the lepers. A distinguished Bedi sardar lead a deputation to the Commissioner against this interference in the custom of the people. He reminded the Sahib of the solemn promise

given at time of annexation to not to interfere in the customs of the people. Lawrence replied, "We will abide by our promise if you abide by yours. We will not interfere with your customs if you do not interfere with ours. Your custom is to burn widows; our custom is to hang them who burn them."



Roop Kuwari who committed Sati with her husband soon after her marriage.

ioners who abhor Sati



conceptions of justice.

The Sikh scriptures do not sanction barbarities like Sati. Sati is mentioned in the Adi Granth but only as a standard of commitment to truth and quest for a better world. Nowhere in the Sikh lore do we find evidence of the glorification of the practice of Sati. The teachings of Gurubani speak for living out the span of life assigned to us.

Sati is murder and it should be deemed as such by the law of the land. I admit that as an educationist I am doing nothing special to awaken the youthful opinion against such evils. Frankly speaking the routines of the educational set up hardly leave time for this kind of

exercise. I wish we could do more to awaken the human conscience against this persistent evil.

Mrs Neera Chandhoke is a Doctor of Philosophy, a social activist tending to be revolutionary. She teaches Political Science in the University of Delhi.

These news of the Sati yet bring us to the barbarism amidst civilization. this horrible practice is a total denial of the identity of the women as a person. It reinforces women's dependence on men. This total dependence, though projected as protection, is a kind of cruelty which she suffers in our society. The culmination of this dependence is the practice of Sati.



Sati in any case is murder. It is in some cases a ritualised murder. Insofar as it is voluntary it arises out of a need for self-redemption. Women is so much estranged and privitised that she looks for terrible forms of self-redemption. Sati is one such form. It is rooted not in self-fulfillment but in near total lack of it. In a society which does not offer her meaningful intervention after the death of the husband she resorts to extreme steps like Sati to redeem herself in the eyes of her parents, in-laws and even herself. Whatever its psychological falcurum the real content of Sati is wanton loss of a human life.

I have not gone into the historical evolution of Sati, nor have approached it in terms of comparison of the Hindu and the Muslim traditon about this practice. It has shot into the centre of our attention all of a sudden because of the Deorala Sati case.

I firmly believe that the law should spare no body guilty of connivance of this barbarity. In case no action is taken such cases dull the public sensitivity to such a degree that the evil continues unchallenged.

Mrs Aisha Abbassi is M.A. (History) and working as Librarian at the Aiwan-e-Ghalib Library.

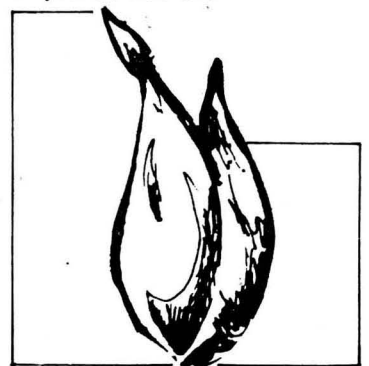


I am aware of the recent instance of Roop Kanwar a young beautiful girl of nineteen was burnt as Sati in Rajasthan. It is an evil crying for firm handling. It is a pity that after the reforms spearheaded by men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan the evil rituals like Sati continue to take the toll of human life.

Human life is dear and precious. It is a filthy mockery to burn someone alive and then provide funny justifications for the barbarity. The practice of

female infanticide and widow-burning was widely prevalent amongst the pre-Muslim people. The Prophet prohibited such practices. People were ordered to live the span of life given to them by God Almighty.

Sati does not fit into the concept of truthful life laid down in Islam. If Roop Kanwar's husband had died why could not she be remarried or encouraged to live her own free life. May be she did not have many people to help her particularly when her own parents and in-laws had persuaded her to commit Sati. If I were in her place I would have revolted against this custom and found out ways and means to carry on after the first battle for justice was over.



The Road Accident

Sudershan Chopra

The stifling and oppressive atmosphere of his house on account of the large crowd of mourners makes him gloomy and bored. He rises from his seat and moves to go out. While he tries to cross the courtyard, all eyes turn to him and make him the focus. But he disdainfully brushes aside the effect of their visual contact and paces out of doors.

He trudges slowly and reaches the road. It is a chilly evening of the passing winter. As he has come out in a shirt, pants and slippers, he feels a shiver through his body. He lights a cigarette and draws in a long puff.

On seeing the dilapidated condition of the road he feels strangely exasperated and agitated. Road illumination is inadequate and offers no help to the pedestrians. Lamp-posts stand quite apart and bulbs of many are fused. The road is under repairs and is being broadened. Pebbles are spread on it here and there. But unfortunately, this has been the state since long.

Only he recalls that a couple of months back on this very spot...yes, on this spot, just in from this wooden stall, lay two mutilated dead bodies—a father and his son—and their twisted bicycle beside them. They were crushed under a heavy limestone trolley. On enquiry he came to know that the father, back from his workshop had accompanied his son to the market to purchase text-books. The road had been dug out with the object of broadening it and a layer of pebbles was spread. On both sides of the road lay heaps of redstone dust and the drums of coaltar were placed on fire to melt the tar out of them. Coming from the lime kiln a tractor with a loaded trolley was running on this uneven road in a way as if it was tilling an already hoed field. But when it passed after crushing the father and son like manure and spilling a good quantity of lime on them, the whole scene presented a horrible picture of blood and lime.

After stumbling over a drum of coaltar in the darkness, he hardly manages to balance his body and narrowly misses a fall face downward. The lighted cigarette falls from his hand. The toe portion of his left slipper gives way. It now becomes difficult for him to walk on the road with broken slipper. He stops with a sudden jerk at one place and lights another cigarette.

With the very first puff, a sharp current of agony fills his lungs. He takes the lighted matchstick down to see his injured toe. The nail is separated from the flesh and the inner cover of his slipper is marked with blood. The blood in the cavity between the sole and the heel produces an unpleasant sensation. He has the feeling of walking in mud and frets on account of his loathsome sensation. He suddenly turns back and carries the broken slipper dangling over the finger of his left hand.

He walks on, hobbling. In order to save his clothes from soiling he hangs the bloodbathed slipper like a man who carries a newly butchered chicken.

All of a sudden he is being pushed from behind by a powerful flash of light. His long shadow, all the more elongated, rolls before him on the road. Then the horn of a rattling jeep warns him to keep off the road. In the headlight of the jeep, he throws a glance at his broken slipper full of dripping blood. As he brings it close to his eyes for better examination a few drops of blood fall on his shirt and pants. Meanwhile, sharp splinters prick his foot from below and the nail-losetoe gives an acute pain from above.

enquiring constable, in order to make him observe better. Seeing the blood dripping from his slippers, the constable is startled, but utters almost joyous surprise, "Oh! Blood!"

"Blood!" With this word, the Police Officer and other constables jump out of the jeep as if they have got news of a hidden treasure. Then a volley of questions is discharged:

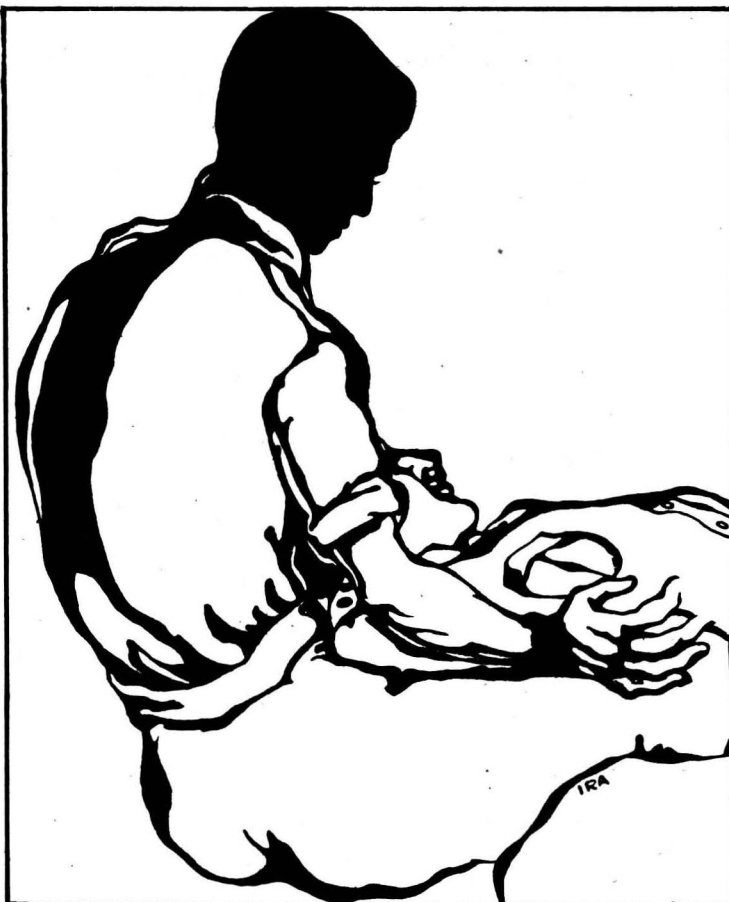
"Whose slipper is this?"

"Mine."

"And that blood?"

"Mine." In an easy manner he points out his injured toe.

The officer looks disappointed and, returning to the jeep, scolds him irritably, "But, do you know how many times we had to sound the



"Why did I come to this road in slippers?" He begins to think. "But I...", he seems to press his mind and even squeeze it for better recollection. "When did I put on these slippers? I was in my shoes, black ones with pointed toes. I went to the market in the afternoon in my shoes and in this very garment. Then on my way back in the evening... yes, yes... what happened on my return? Let me think... Ouch! Leave it! Let go whatever happened! What can I do now? Perhaps I had put my slippers on while coming out of the house."

The loud sound of the horn awakens him from a deep swoon. Getting down from the jeep, a constable enquires of him. "Are you deaf? The sound of the horn is so loud and shrill that even a deaf can hear."

Another voice from the jeep echoes in the air: "Blind as well, as he cannot see even such a dazzling light."

Then an official tone is heard: "See, what is in his hand and ask why he stands here?"

"O knave! What is in your hand?"

But keeping mum, he thrusts forward his bloodcovered slipper before the eyes of the

horns? If the driver had not applied the brakes in time you would have been crushed under the jeep."

"May be he has come out of his house with the intention of committing suicide."

This suspicion brings the whole force of constables again around him.

"What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"That means you are unemployed?"

"Yes."

"Where do you live?"

"Just near."

"Where?"

"At Model Town."

"In whose house?"

"I do not know."

"What?"

"I do not know the name of the landlord."

"What a strange person! You do not know even the name of your landlord."

"I have arrived here recently. Actually my brother has been living in this city."

"Anyway, keep to the left on the footpath. Don't you see what a rush of heavy-load trucks is there on this road? And the road is under repairs," said the officer.

"But, where is that footpath to walk on?" Withdrawing himself to one side, he walks up on a heap of redstone dust.

"Then you will die in the middle of the road," the officer speaks angrily. But, thinking that further discussion was simply a waste of time, he jumps to his seat in the jeep; others follow him. The jeep starts and passes by him, making a deafening noise.

The darkness slowly surges back. There is no road light here as the bulbs of the lamp-posts are fused. Those which are lighted throw only a dim light that is lost in the environment before striking the road.

A cycle rickshaw, jolting sideways like a modern girl in tight outfit, approaches from the front, sounding its horn continually and giving uneasy jerks to its fair passenger who manages with difficulty to avoid a fall by. This reminds him of an accident and makes the memory of a previous tragedy on this road fresh.

It was noon. There was a heavy traffic on this road. A woman with an infant in her lap was travelling in a cycle rickshaw. The wheel of the rickshaw hit a big piece of stone and tilted to one side. With a sudden jerk, the infant fell on the road and was run over by a truck. Under the double wheels of that heavy truck, overloaded with sugarcane, all that was left was a purple spot on the road.

Since I have come to this city, he ponders, I have always found this road in the same state. God knows how many more sacrifices it will still take before completion.

A sharp piece of stone has again run into his bare foot and he feels a shooting pain. Limping, he moves to one side and sits on a mound of redstone dust. He watches the police jeep taking a turn into his street. But the next moment a strong whiff of coaltar smell assails his nostrils. He thinks: Is this the way to put such a busy road under repairs, and that too without constructing a diversion first? Even without a proper arrangement for lighting? Is was far better when not dug out. Naturally, before coaltar is finally spread on it, it would have been covered with a layer of human blood!

He is up again but as he has relaxed, the foot injury is causing greater pain. "How long will it take to heal? I shall not at all be able to put on my shoes till then. But why should I wear shoes? A man like me who knows not the proper use of his foot has no right to wear shoes. Leave it now!"

Unexpectedly he walks fast this time, but sharp pain does

not allow him to do so. The injury and needlelike pieces of stones on the road have slowed down his speed.

"If I had this injury a short while ago, perhaps this tragedy could have been averted for an injured foot would not have dealt such fatal blows. But those too were the strokes of an injured heart."

The nailless toe is now giving him excruciating pain. He wants to let off such a loud shriek that the very foundations of this city, where there are such bad roads that accidents cannot be avoided and injuries are quite frequent, would be shaken.

In the darkness, wrapped up in his thoughts, he hits his head against a lamp-post. He feels unsteady and giddy on account of this sudden impact. For support, he leans against the lamp-post itself.

After coming to, he looks all around and finds material enough to explode his mind and break his heart. But, now he feels that both these limbs in his body are made of stone and covered with a coat of defensive reasoning.

"In one way, it was good for the poor little soul to leave this world early, as he was quickly out of this hell. The child did not even have shoes to cover his tiny and delicate feet. How long could he move on the hard roads of this city? And then, in my presence, the motherless child was subjected to such ill treatment! How could I tolerate all this? The only fault of that neglected and wretched child was that he wanted something to cover his nakedness. For this trifling matter he was put to such humiliation. It is because I am unemployed. I still remember very clearly that, while hitting him with the pointed toe of my shoe, I was pretty conscious that I was thrashing my own degraded self. How can I admit that I wanted to murder my own child? I was his father and had blood relation with him: after all, blood is thicker than water."

Discarding the support of the lamp-post, he walks briskly towards his house. He at last stands in front of the house reclining over the police jeep. He silently listens to the clamorous wailing in his house and watches intently like a traveller who is a witness to a road accident. The wound in his foot gets cold and the frozen blood acts like a bandaid. He is again lost in thought:

"What would have happened if I had not struck my child with my boot? Who knows? Life is a singular and changeable thing, full of vicissitudes. How little it takes to save or wreck-up!"

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Why The Land and the People Remain Thirsty-II

Bharat Dogra

In this second part of the case-study, why the land and the people remain thirsty on evaluation of drinking water schemes in the Patha region of Banda district (Uttar Pradesh) is presented.

Villagers of Samhariya tolaa are forced to bring dirty water from Khiddi tank nearly three kms. away. People of Mahadevnagar near Manipur town, depend for their water-supply on a source which has been reduced to such a trickle that they have to wait a long time taking turns to collect a minimum supply of drinking water. At Gopipur village also people have to similarly wait for water but when the source dries up entirely they have to walk one town to another source. Bharat ki Tikuri village has a well but it dries up in summer so they have to go one km. to the next nearest source. Haata village has hand pump but it does not yield water so they have to go to Khiddi tank two kms away to get the dirty water available there. People from several other villagers depend on another tank, a big one called Raja Ka Talab which they share with cattle as their most trusted source a reliable source of drinking water. Nadvania village has a hand-pump and also a well, but unable to draw water from here people have to go outside the village for drinking water. For a short period during the summer the government sanctioned a bullock cart to fetch two drums of water for the villagers, but this had been discontinued now.

All these villages are located in the Patha region of Uttar Pradesh (at the administrative level all these villages are in the Manikpur block of Banda district), an area whose name invariably crops up in any discussion on water-shortage in Uttar Pradesh. A large part of the area is rocky and watertable is very low. Here one comes across wells dug up to 50 meters or even more, and sometimes even after digging so deep water may not be struck. The water situation is not so bad in the entire area but such conditions do prevail in quite a large part of the area.

Ambitious Scheme

An ambitious Patha water scheme was started in 1969-70 to tackle the drinking water shortage of this area. Budgeted at Rs.130 million, this scheme aimed to lift water up an height of about 100 meters from a river and supply it to several far flung villages or settlement. This involved five stage pumping

and laying of long pipelines, mostly underground but some as in very rocky area-also over-ground.

Some problems started at the outset when the contractors, mostly influential local men, decided to change in pipe routes arbitrarily to suit their convenience and also deny water connections to some hamlets of the poor. At a later stage, it became more and more clear with passing time that this showpiece, financed by foreign

Scope for Improvement

Now the work of laying new pipelines has been started, but this at best will solve only a part of the problems which hamper the proper functioning of this drinking water scheme.

On the other hand there are numerous examples of traditional water sources of villagers languishing for need of modest repairs. There are several springs or small rivulets

sources are known as chaubras. There is considerable scope for improving the drinking water supply by improving these Chauharas, building or improving the structures around them, deepening them etc. At a place Kihunriya villagers sitting near a Chaubra said that it fulfills the needs of 13 families of of Daari settlement and during summer when other sources dry up, it also meet the requirements of

potential can be improved with some badly needed repairs. In Kekramaar village a portion of a well is sinking and its water is becoming dirty. The B.D.O. had promised that the repair work will be done this summer, but it wasn't done. In Kohlihas village also an incomplete well remain in a neglected state while villagers walk 1 Km. to fetch drinking water.

Repair, deepening, plantation work on several tanks can greatly improve the drinking water situation for cattle. At a corner of Mandirtola tank we noticed a perennial source which by building a structure near it can be used for storing drinking water. There is considerable scope for these low-budget-small scale efforts all over the area. It would have been much better to first use the available resources to fully use this potential and only then if necessary go in for big grand projects expensive to build and equally expensive to maintain and which increasing the dependence of villagers for daily, basic needs forces which appear to them to be beyond their control.

Thus looking at both irrigation and drinking water schemes together, distorted priorities corruption, collusion of corrupt officials with influential local landlords-cum-contractors, the ability of the latter to twist development schemes to their own ends, the inequitable socio-economic structure of the area and its domination by some landlords-cum-contractors all these emerge as important factors behind the failure of investments in irrigation and drinking water schemes to give the expected benefits in this area. These are the factors which have kept the land and the people of Patha thirsty and despite big investment to quench this thirst. (concluded)



A tribal hut

aid, was attractive to build but very difficult to maintain. Proper maintenance depended on adequate availability of funds and their proper honest utilisation. None of these conditions was met. Electricity disruptions, non-availability of spare parts, delays in carrying out repairs, reduced capacity of pump houses all played havoc with the functioning of the project. Some pipes were broken, while some others were stolen.

The combined result of all this in recent years has been that less than one half of the over 200 villages supposed to have benefited from this scheme have been able to get some water from these schemes, the number declining further in the summer when the need is most acute.

A social worker who talked with officials in detail some time back about the problem of this scheme came back with the impression that the lower officials blame the dishonesty and corruption in purchase of equipment and spare parts for the poor functioning of the scheme, while senior officials blame the inefficiency of lower level employees for this.

around which a small structure is built to prevent cattle from drinking this water and to keep the water clean. These water

an additional 30 to 40 families of Deepu Kolan.

In addition there are several wells whose drinking water

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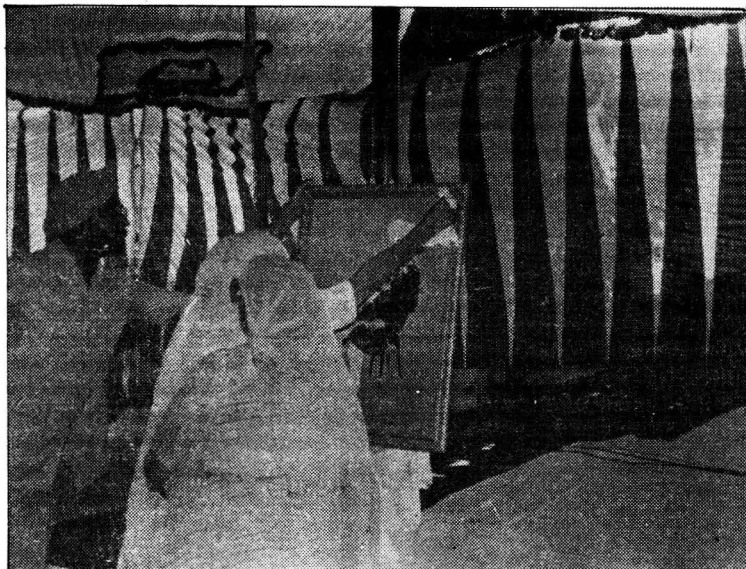
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S.B.S. MODREN HIGH SCHOOL CELEBRATES THE FOUNDER'S DAY

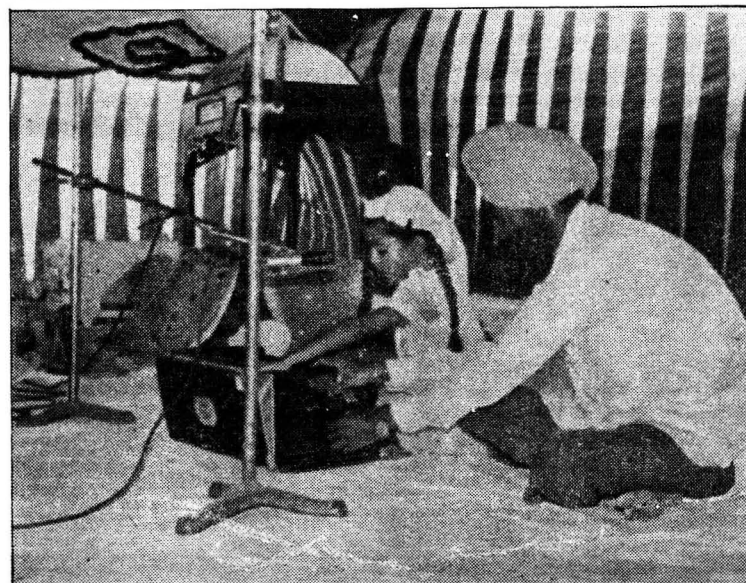
A decade ago when S. Balwant Singh Butalia left his estate worth a couple of million rupees at that time as foudation-funds for a good school people applauded his noble deed as an act of charity. Today, the school founded by this endowment has grown into a monument to the service of mankind without discriminations of caste and creed. S.B.S. Modern High School Karnal celebrated its founders day in September 1987. A pictorial report.



The portrait of the founder being garlanded by S.H.S. Nalwa and Mrs Butalia.



The Diwan



Kulpreet Kaur III reciting a shabad.

Letters

Vultures of London

In Weekly "Sunday" magazine (19-25 July 87) Mr M.J. Akbar had writtirn an article entitled "The Vultures of London". Mr. Harjinder Singh finding the article provocative and insulting to the Sikhs sent a rejoinder to the editor. The magazine did publish the letter but in a much shorter form. To give vent to the feelings of the writer and for the information of the readers we are publishing the rejoinder in full (ed.)

Sir, M.J. Akbar's Byline (Sunday, 19-25 July, 1987) is, in polite terms, less than fair to the Sikhs. It rather adds insult to injury. It appears that Akbar, in a moment of uncontrolled emotional strain, has visited his wrath against a particular individual or a particular section of the Sikhs community, on all the Sikh people. Forgetting the sacrifices and contributions of the Sikhs in the national causes and struggle (which are proportionately much higher than their numerical ratio in the country) Akbar has cast aspersions on the whole of the Sikh community and held out a veiled threat to the beleaguered people.

While no Sikh will approve of the meddling of these "Vultures of London" or "Khalistanis without any commitment to India" in the affairs of the country. Akbar's vituperative diatribe against the people who went to England to escape the abject poverty of our "Golden Sparrow" and braved all sorts of misfortunes and miseries there to earn a living, appears to be just a journalistic gimmick to evade the real issue. His reference to "cleaning up lavatories" by the men of the great "martial race" borders on meanness, to say the least. Such outbursts from a

seasoned journalist like Akbar of the fame of "India: The Siege Within" are simply disgusting. Akbar should know the Sikhs are undoubtedly a "martial race" and whenever the opportunity has arisen, they have proved it to the hilt. There should be no mistaking about it.

Akbar is certainly right in asserting that "it was not easy to create the dream called India", but he forgets what the Sikhs did and what sacrifices they made to create this dream without ever dreaming that one day this dream would become a nightmare for them. They are being made a scapegoat for the fiendish acts of others and are being made to suffer perpetually for no fault of their own. Akbar's supposition that Sikhs and Sikhs alone are responsible for the massacre of the bus passengers is nothing but a mammoth fallacy of logic. Convicting a person or a people before the truth is out is simply unfair and treacherous.

Talking of 1947 and the present, Akbar reminds the "criminals and murderers" of two great differences then and now. First, he says there is no foreign force in power in Delhi now. All Indians including the Sikhs, are proud and aware of the fact that we are ruled by our own representatives but our only regret is that our present day rulers are perpetrating upon the nation what "no foreign force in power in Delhi" might have thought of committing. To use Akbar's own words differently and appropriately, our rulers cheat us and kick us when they come; they cheat and kick us while they rule; and they cheat and wound us when they leave.

The second reminder Akbar puts forward is about the "powerful will and a tremendous determination" and "powerful institutions", that the nation has created over the years after independence to

destroy any challenge to its unity. Akbar goes on to remind of "a small part of this will" demonstrated in 1984 elections (presumably he meant riots and not elections) and his "great worry" that this will "might manifest itself in violent forms if pushed beyond certain point". This second difference pointed out by Akbar is nothing but a threat of violence to the innocent Sikhs (and even the innocent Muslims) by the State. Will Mr. Akbar kindly elaborate what "powerful institutions" the Indian people have created after independence? The Sikhs know only of one kind of these "powerful institutions" that can play mayhem and massacre the innocent people, the Sikhs as well as the Muslims.

We are no doubt at a critical point in our "national fortunes" but this critical point embraces areas much larger than the Punjab problem alone. When the nation is stinking of unprecented corruption and nepotism at the highest level and the vested interests are resorting to the meanest tactics including that of violence to keep their hold on power, why blame the helpless Sikhs? The people of India are, no doubt, "essentially decent", but decency is most wanting it is most needed, in the rulers themselves.

Such an outburst, particularly from a man of integrity like M.J. Akbar is most unfortunate and regrettable. It might have come from the fanatical vernacular press from the State of Punjab, which put a big share in conflagrating the Punjab problem. Such write-ups, instead of bringing the Sikhs back to the national mainstream will only push them away and accentuate their anguish and agony.

Yours etc.
(Harjinder Singh Tangri)
Old Cantt Road, Faridkot

Poverty in India

Continued from page 6

It is not that India is poor in resources. The country is fantastically rich in natural resources. These are exploited by the rich to their own advantage. The advantages of being the masters of distribution are many. The men involved in the process of distribution as government officials have bested interests.

Beyond that it is the deeper malady, the exploitation of man by man, which is inherent in the system of social relationship that we have accepted. It is the man's treatment of other man, which has got diluted after independence. The exploitation by Britishers ended in 1947, but our own men started exploiting our own people. Exploitation of the poor by the rich, of the rural India by urban India. One section of the Indian society is perennially being permitted by the system to corner the fruits of development to the impoverishment of the multitude rest. The ordinary Indian is bound to be exploited, because he is so placed in the system. He is weak

and meek. He is so conditioned that he must tolerate injustice. He does not have the courage to face the system. In rural India, previously it was the Zamindar, now it is the rich farmer, who exploits the poor. The official machinery is corrupt, it sides with the rich. The job of eradication of pverty has been assigned to those, who are the sustainers of poverty. In urban areas, it is the industrialist, the big businessman, and the highly placed officialdom in the state machinery, who combine together to sustain the conditions of poverty, because it is in their interest.

Some studies were recently conducted in the states of Bihar, Karnataka, Rajasthan, M.P. and U.P. about the impact of poverty-alleviation programmes launched by the government. The field evidence presents a true horror story—seventyfour per cent of the households surveyed, assisted under various programmes in one block, were above the poverty line, while in another block, the proportion of such households was 60 per cent. It

has been pointed out that 78 per cent of the households assisted under the IRDP in Udipi in Karnataka were above the poverty line and were definitely ineligible under the scheme. According to the study, "There are many among the functionaries, who have converted the anti-poverty programmes resources to their personal advantages".

Economic backwardness and inequality are the twin causes of poverty. One cannot underplay the other. Economists are now fully convinced that the problem of poverty cannot be overcome by efforts in any one single direction. Only a broad based policy, that attacks poverty on all fronts, political, economic, social and cultural can help solve the problem of poverty. The egalitarian control over the means of production, the spirited genuine revival of massive participation in the developmental-distribution process and adoption of the principle of democratic decentralisation can alleviate this malady.

Police entries into the Golden Temple do more harm than good

Harcharan Bains

The fact of the matter is that for militants as well as for the police and paramilitary, it is a race for newspaper headlines. The nation's war against terrorism is being conducted through the mofusil correspondent who is famous neither for his professional brilliance nor for his probity.

No religious shrine in the world has ever attracted the kind of international media attention so consistently and over such a long period as the Golden Temple has done over the past five years. Unfortunately, most of the attention has been for reasons other than purely religious. The emotional and the spiritual significance of the place has largely been lost on both the administration and those misusing the place for militant activities. The common Sikh, by nature and emotional and devout character, is in a state of great perplexity and anguish over the controversy surrounding the holiest seat of his religion. He is caught in a ruthless media crossfire between what he regards as an irreverent state force and the equally irreverent and misguided elements in his own community.

However, as things stand today, the common Sikh has become lamentably irrelevant. While both the administration and the militants seemingly angle for his sympathy and support, neither seems to understand the deeply troubled state that his soul is going through.

Over the years, both sides have used the common Sikh and the Golden Temple for performing cheap gimmicks. A sustained campaign in the media in 1983 brought the complex into sharp focus as a "Sanctuary for terrorists and anti-national elements." But nothing was done against these elements when an officer of the rank of DIG was gunned down in cold blood at the gates of the Temple. No one will ever know why nothing was done when the entire Sikh community was shocked at the incident. Nor did the Akalis and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) ever muster courage enough to lead a popular campaign to save this holy place from being shrouded in the thick of unseemly controversy. The coming generations will adjudge the Akalis, the state and the central governments and those who engineered such violent acts as equally guilty.

And now we are fast moving towards a situation in which every major act of violence in the state is answered with the entry of the police into the

Golden Temple. All such entries to this day have been classic examples of shutting the door after the horse has bolted. One almost gets a feeling that these entries are aimed more at denying publicity mileage to the acts of militancy than at achieving any administrative breakthrough.

The Punjab administration has admitted that the police and the military have gone into the Golden Temple complex at least 14 times over the past one year. Not even one of these entries has yielded results comparable to the tremendous psychological damage it has caused. The April 30, 1986 commando operation was admittedly a fiasco and the latest "Operation Search" in June exposed the administration to utter ridicule, their tall claims of success not matched by the recoveries made from inside the complex. The evening before the operation, the Amritsar SSP had told us that the complex had again been turned into a sanctuary for the terrorists and antinational elements and was virtually an arsenal for the most lethal weapons. The cache of arms recovered the next morning had nothing more than an obsolete pistol, a few cartridges and letters to show. Once again, the police entry into the holiest shrine of the Sikhs had done more harm than good. Even if the purpose of the police entry was to stop the All-India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF) convention, everyone familiar with the niceties of administration would agree that this could have easily been achieved by imposing curfew around the complex.

It seems that successive governments in Punjab and New Delhi have been all at sea as to the tactics adopted by the militants. The latter have been remarkably successful in provoking the administration into actions that reveal and incredible lack of ideas and understanding. Each action of the government has taken it farther and farther away from the people who matter—the Sikh masses—without causing any serious dent in the activities of the militants.

It also seems that the security set-up in the state has hardly done any homework on the dynamics of terrorism. The

Punjab director general of police, Mr J.F. Ribeiro recently said that the history of terrorism showed that the menace tended to wane in the face of persistent onslaught by the security forces. It was nice to hear someone in the police force talking of history for a change. But that is about the only consolation one could draw from Mr. Ribeiro's observation. He was probably referring to the studies conducted by men like Walter Lacqueur. But Lacqueur and his like themselves draw clear distinction between terrorism for limited political purposes and nationalist separatist terrorism. If Mr Ribeiro himself is to be believed, there is a definite separatist element in Punjab terrorism. But Mr Ribeiro must himself be aware that limited political terrorism does not need to operate with a popular backing as its main aim is to expose the hypocrisies inherent in any imperfect democracy or to strike against chosen targets. But the nationalist separatist terrorist has the enormous advantage of striking precisely in a way that would induce the administration into ambitious false strokes calculated to get romantic results but doomed almost always to end in disaster in the form of alienation of the people from the state machinery.

The Punjab militants have established another formidable superiority over the present administration. They seem to have sensed that in sharp contrast to their own nibbling tactics so useful in long drawn out battles of attrition, they are up against an opponent who is in a tearing hurry to finish the argument. The advantage of patience and waiting lies with the militants rather than with the administration keen on producing quick glamorous results, the frequent entries into the Golden Temple being an expression of this keenness. The militants also seem to have realised something that governments seldom see: that the way to win a battle of attrition lies through gradual domination rather than through something suddenly spectacular. The efficacy of the administration's new drive is going to be judged not by the increase in the number of "terrorists" killed by them but by the decrease in the number of persons killed by the terrorists. It is important to keep this distinction in mind. Otherwise, the problem of terrorism may still be with us even after Mr Ribeiro and his force have finished a whole generation of "terrorists."

In this regard, one suspects that the administration's over emphasis on the Golden

Temple as a sanctuary for militants is not only misplaced but it also serves the interest of the militants rather than that of the administration. While the militants look capable of provoking the security forces into launching high profile futile forays into the complex, and thereby showing them up as unthinking bullies, they themselves can ensure a much higher degree of success in the occasional gory spectacles like the Delhi killings or bus massacres. By forcing the administration to play the game in their (the militants') style, they will always have two crucial advantages: they know the game better and they can force the security forces to behave in a manner in which they come off in the public eye as no more scrupulous and principled than the militants themselves. They can thus deprive the administration of about the only major long run advantage it has: the image of being a force engaged in a virtuous fight against the forces of evil. In other words, the administration would lose the moral right to fight the militants on an ideological plane.

Add to this the high probability that there would be "encounters" in which innocents will be killed. And no amount of painting these ordinary people as terrorists would wash with a population already willing to believe the worst about the administration.

A terrorist is different from an

ordinary criminal because he is an activist with a cause. His biggest weapon is his "cause". In order to reduce him to an ordinary criminal, he must be ideologically disarmed by depriving him of the legitimacy of his cause. This can only be done by convincing the aggrieved sections of the public whom the terrorist claims to represent that their grievances can be removed far more conveniently through a moderate approach. This has obviously not happened in Punjab. The experience of the past 20 months has led many in the state to believe that the moderates were led up the garden path and then dropped in mid-air. This has lent grist to the militant propaganda mill that moderation does not pay. This has taken us a million steps, back in our efforts to normalise conditions. The fight is not so much against the terrorist as against the terrorist sentiment and conditions that reduce and encourage it.

It is in this context that the merits of each police entry into the Golden Temple must be carefully weighted against the tremendous psychological damage it causes, especially when a search conducted by over 200 police and by paramilitary men ends up with an object like a pistol to show for all their pains.

There is another reason why the administration's obsession

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Punjab police chief J.F. Ribeiro in the Golden Temple complex

Police entries into the Golden Temple

Continued from page 13

wit the complex appears to lack hard commonsense. If the militants are really as highly motivated and well trained as they seem to be, they are unlikely to do something so tactically inadvisable as defending a fixed position. This runs contrary to the very philosophy of terrorism the crux of which is to attack unsuspecting victims at the unlikeliest of hours and the most unpredictable of places. Nowhere in the world have the terrorists ever tried to defence a particular zone, area or citadel. Were they to do so, the state, with all its awesome might, would find it incredibly easy to wipe them out. That is the essential difference between guerrilla warfare and terrorism. The terrorists never risk being predicted or anticipated either about their timing or about their location. Their second most important weapon is their invisibility that ensures for them the priceless advantage of the element of surprise. There is no sign yet that we have grasped this simple truth.

In the circumstances, the terrorists are in the enviable position of occasionally throwing a red rag to the fuming administrative bull who, in its impotent rage, would often stamp on the innocent crowds and the victims would become potential recruits to terrorism.

This happened on April 30, 1986 when the Panthic committee fled as soon as it had made the declaration about the

formation of a separate state. An impatient and trigger happy paramilitary fell to the bait and ended up looking like a wet cat as the committee members had already fled the scene. But before leaving they had achieved their primary objective of committing the administration to a misadventure. The damage done by that misadventure is still with us. And what is worse, the administration, like the French royalty seems to have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing.

Mr. Ribeiro could not be more right than when he says that in order to win the war against terrorism, it is necessary to win the hearts of the people. But how does one win people's hearts? And which people by the way? Surely Mr Ribeiro must be aware that for his purpose the people whose hearts must be won are the Sikhs. And these, ironically, are the very people whose support he has been losing by the repeatedly unsuccessful operations at the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras. Whether Mr Ribeiro likes to admit it or not, each action of his has won him more Hindu friends whose support he can well do without unless, like our politicians, he is also playing to the gallery. He must take care that he is seen as a professional police officer rather than as a khadi clad political demagogue.

The fact of the matter is that for militants as well as for the police and paramilitary, it is a

race for newspaper headlines. The nation's war against terrorism is being conducted through the mofussil correspondent who is famous neither for his professional brilliance nor for his probity.

In order to convince the common man and consequently win his heart, the fight against violence must be shown to have moral sanctions behind it. The ethical logic of violence becomes operative only after all other available means of reaching a settlement have been tried and have failed. Any killing without a sanction behind it is essentially a terrorist act, no matter whether the man who pulls the trigger wears a uniform or sports a turban. And if, as Mr Ribeiro quite perceptively observes, we must win the people's hearts, it is about time we set down to figure out what exactly we have done in that direction. And if nothing has been done, can the blame be put on people's hearts?

No place of worship including the Golden Temple need be placed beyond the reach of the law enforcing machinery, if conditions there pose a threat to peace. At the same time, whenever a decision to send the police in has to be taken, its merits must be weighed carefully against the problems it creates for a return to normalcy. Administrative adventurism is no substitute for statesmanship.

(Coustesy The Telegraph)

SOUND AND FURY

(Rajiv Gandhi) is a Prime Minister who has liquidated his own party.

Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, paraphrasing Churchill's famous remark.

There is no water in the eyes of the people even to weep—

N.T. Rama Rao, on the drought in Andhra Pradesh?

When I go to the north, the papers write I have gone south. This is the type of journalism here. Jyoti Basu.

First I was in Rashtrapati Bhavan, now I am in the White House—
Zail Singh, referring to his white-painted Circular Road bungalow in New Delhi.

I was made Sankaracharya for life. I will always belong to the Kanchi math—

Sri Jayendra Saraswathi, former head of the math.

The terrorists are in the enviable position of occasionally throwing a red rag to the fuming administrative bull who, in its impotent rage, would often stamp on the innocent crowds and the victims would become potential recruits to terrorism.

Harcharan Singh Bains in Telegraph.

We (of the Opposition) will first plunge into the river and then learn how to swim and not the otherway round—

Jyoti Basu.

If the Prime Minister answers every question, he will have time for nothing else.

Mr. Romesh Bhandari.

If our Prime Minister holds too exhalted a position to reply to every barking dog, let his 400 silent dogs take on the job of answering questions.

Mr. Ram Jethmalani

I left the Congress when it became Congress Italy instead of Congress India.

Mr. Sanjay Singh

Since I am a sanyasi now, I may not be able to pay the (income) taxes.

Mr. N.T. Rama Rao

I do not accept the fact that there are Sikh terrorists.

Mr. Darshan Singh, acting head priest of the Akal Takht.

For the removal of Marcos, the sacrifice of an Aquino is needed. I am prepared to give my life for this.

Mr. V.P. Singh, former Union defence minister

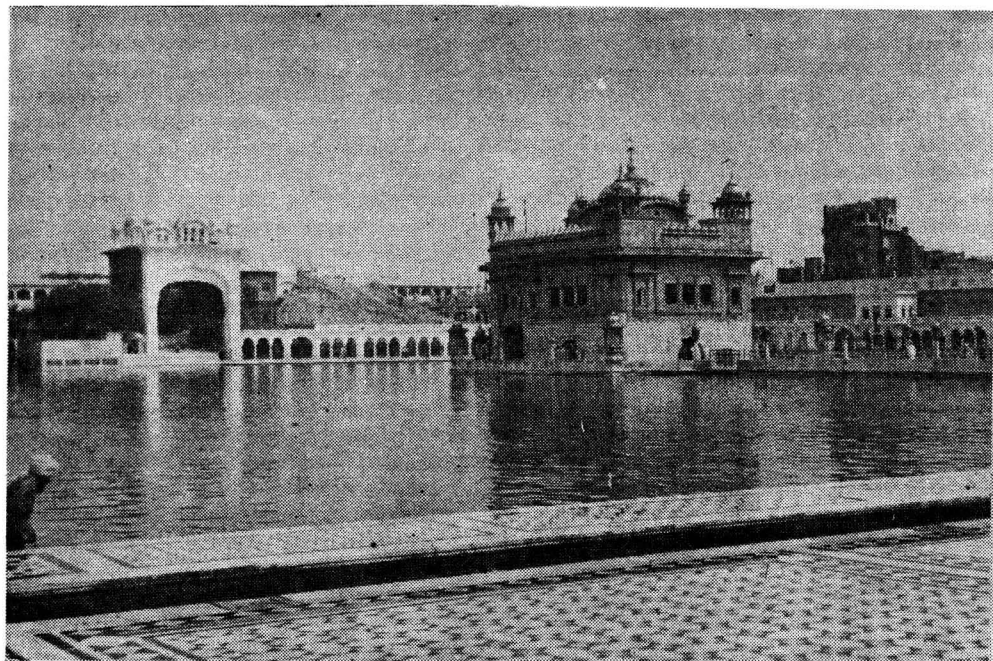
Everyone is equal before the law, be he a minister, an MP or even God.

Jyoti Basu, West Bengal chief minister

The government of India under Rajiv Gandhi has perfected the art of doing the wrong thing at the wrong time in the wrong way—

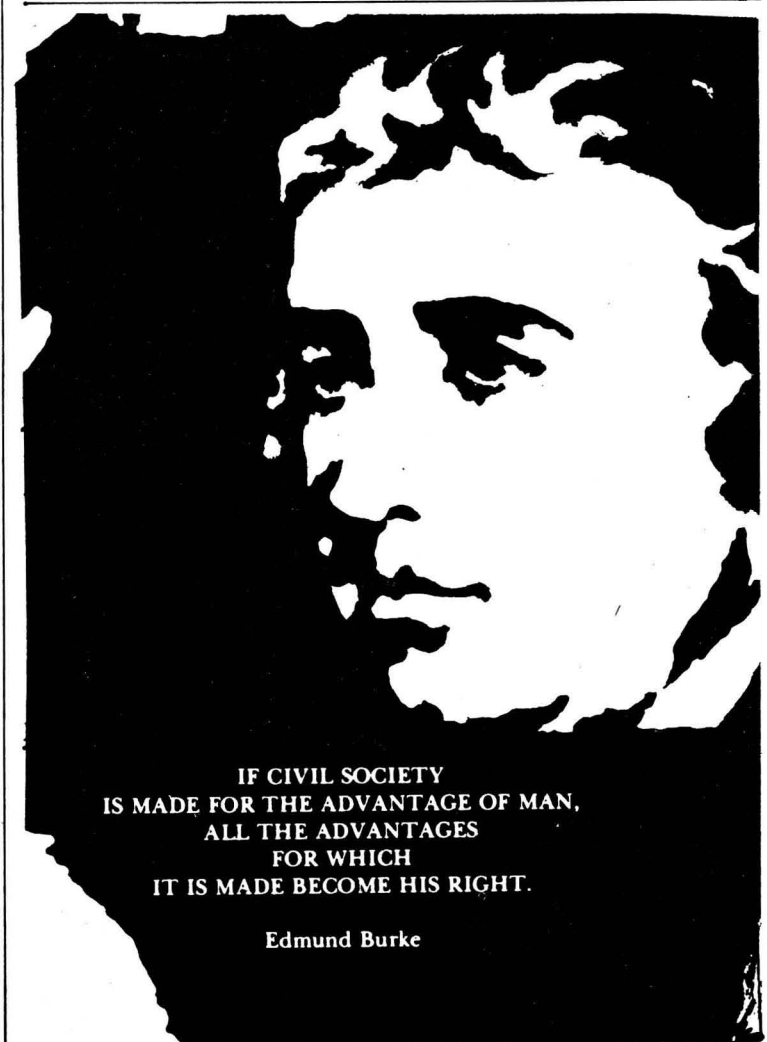
Cho Ramaswamy on the Express raids in The Illustrated Weekly of India. Rajiv is our (the Express) best circulation manager. Our quandary is whether to pay him a salary, a commission, or winding up charges like Win Chadha—

Arun Shourie in India Today.



Liberality is a virtue. The wise and good man will share what he has with others. In this way he will save himself. Giving is saving.

Only what one gives to others will be preserved for him in the future world. The generous will find contentment.



IF CIVIL SOCIETY
IS MADE FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF MAN,
ALL THE ADVANTAGES
FOR WHICH
IT IS MADE BECOME HIS RIGHT.

Edmund Burke

The Drought Policy

Continued from page 16

Unfortunately all energies of the ruling elite as well as of the Opposition parties and politicians are being directed to politicising the issue to get political mileage out of the affected people's misfortune. The drought is being presented as the biggest natural calamity of the present century for the country and claims are being laid on its occupying the sole attention of the Government at the moment to meet the challenge.

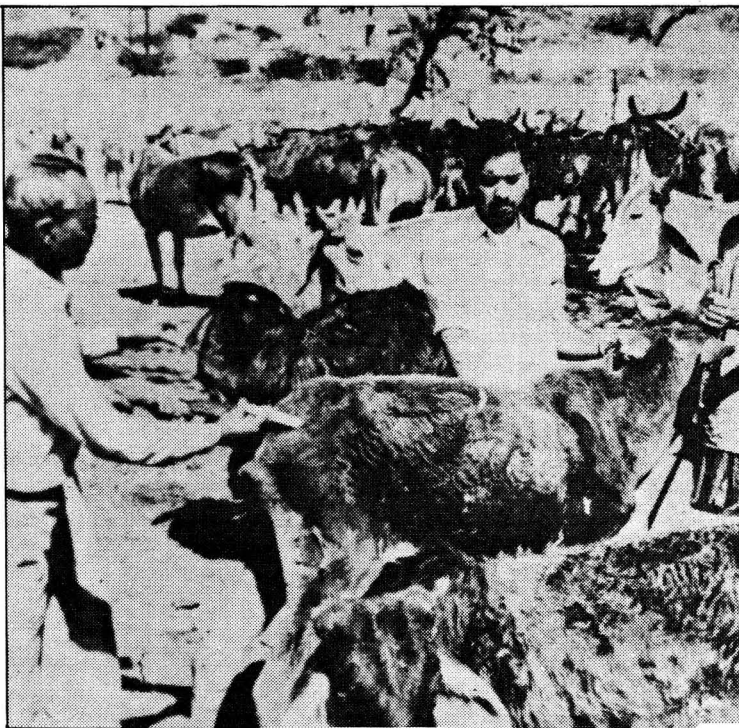
Relief

The emphasis is on "relief" but relief from what remains undefined. The measure of relief afforded, in the eyes of the ruling elite, is the amount of money spent on relief operations. How much of that money actually reaches the victims is of course of nobody's concern for those in authority.

Judging by the experience of working of the various poverty alleviation programmes, it may not be surprising if four-fifth of the amount spent lands into the pockets of the politicians, bureaucrats and the middlemen involved in the relief operations. These sections of the population are going to have a rich harvest of cash out of the current drought. In the past it was the trader and moneylender class that benefited from calamities like famine by indulging in antisocial trade practices. In modern times it is the relief operators and the political power-brokers who do so.

Can this cruel exploitation of a difficult situation by the political elite and heartless middlemen be mitigated and controlled, if not avoided altogether? Yes, that can be done if we put, into a well defined policy frame, the action to be taken in the event of a drought.

This means that instead of Famine Codes drawn up in 1880's which have lost their relevance today because of the change in the nature of challenge that a drought poses these days against what it did in the conditions of the last century, we should now have a Drought Code. This will define action to be initiated in the affected area for meeting the drought situation in respect of ensuring supply of drinking water for man and animal, fodder for the cattle and readjustment of cropping pattern in accordance with



deficient or delayed arrival of rains.

Centre-State Responsibilities

The respective financial obligations of the Centre and the States to meet the drought expenditure will be clearly laid down in the code. The expenditure would become a charge on development account of the State concerned in current five year plan. Financial provision will be made for meeting a drought in the five year plans of every state from the very start so that a state when confronted with a drought situation has not to run to the Centre for subventions and grants. Similarly the construction works to be undertaken to provide employment to agricultural labour in the event of dislocation of normal agricultural operations due to paucity of rains will be broadly defined and listed for each region, blockwise.

Rules concerning maintenance of the works constructed under the drought programme will also have to be framed and strictly enforced, making state government accountable to the legislature regarding keeping of the constructed works in good shape and repair after the drought is over.

This is particularly needed in the case of irrigation and drinking water works constructed as part of drought

relief measures. As was recommended by the Fifth Finance Commission, all the drought or "famine" relief expenditure will be met by the State governments themselves with the Centre making only small grants in the case of extraordinary severity of damage in a State in any year. The present system of a virtual scramble for funds from the Centre for relief operations on the pretext of organizing relief of distress caused by drought/floods on the slightest sign of deficiency or unseasonability of rains, must go. Apart from its being irresponsible and highly wasteful, it allows the Centre to exercise discrimination between Congress and non-Congress ruled States in the distribution of funds for the purpose. That brings in politics into what should be an entirely economic affair and thereby vitiates the whole approach to the problem.

Long Term Policy

Far more important than the immediate problem of providing relief when drought occurs is devising long term policy measures aimed at prevention and mitigation of the impact of drought, if and when it occurs, on crop production, farmers and rural labour incomes, and supply of water. The policy measures that suggest themselves in this connection are:

- (i) The national policy on afforestation that has been drawn up should be faithfully and vigorously implemented. Every effort should be made to restore as quickly as possible the ecological balance that has been lost by the ruthless destruction of forests by cutting down of trees which has been allowed to go on unchecked in the last four decades;
- (ii) The national water policy that has just been announced should be fully implemented in all its aspects. Considering water to be a precious national resource, water conservation plans and programmes should be accorded a high priority in

- our development plans;
- (iii) Much greater research attention needs be given to rainfed and dry-land agriculture than has been the case so far. Advantage should be taken, in this connection, of emerging biotechnologies which promise to transform non-irrigated agriculture in the same way as HYV-Chemical fertilizer technology that triggered the green revolution did in the case of irrigated agriculture;
- (iv) Dry land farming and water conservation practices which include water harvesting, introduction of sprinkle system

- irrigation drip and use of plastics for the purpose, and promotion of stress-bearing and short-duration maturity crops, should be standardized and their knowledge spread to the farmer through a well-organized extension service; and
- (v) Projects about making optimal use of available water resources on single river basin basis first and transfer of surplus water from surplus basin to deficit basin later, should be taken up in the next 10-15 years as high priority national tasks in development of Indian economy.

19 Districts drought affected in Andhra

B. Bhaskar

Politics Of Drought:

Andhra Pradesh is reeling under severe drought. Out of 23 districts 19 were affected by dry spells. This is fourth successive year the state is facing such a terrible condition. 19 districts affected by drought in 1985 so as to 14 in 86. this year 10 Lakh acres land left without paddy cultivation under Krishna Delta as there was no water available. Over all the State has 28 Lakhs hectares of paddy land. Dry spells affected 12 Lakhs hectares of it. Last Kharif season saw 43.65 Lakhs tonnes rice procured from 25.2 Lakh hectares. And this year is was expecting 20 Lakhs tonnes rice from 16.16 Lakhs hectares land. And overall loss of crops amounting Rs.654.94 crores was estimated by State Agriculture Minister Mr. Vasanta Nageswara Rao. 15 per cent below normal rainfall recorded from June 1st to August 26th in the State Under these worst conditions there is no fodder for animals. Drinking water shortage every where. 25 Lakhs agricultural workers affected by drought migrating enmasse in search of work. The repercussions of drought on the rural economy is severe. Small and marginal farmers, land less agricultural labourers were the worst hit. Indian council of Agricultural research estimated 45 per cent crops damaged in Andhra Pradesh. Chief Minister Mr. N.T. Rama Rao toured nine districts and surveyed the situation. 'Meet the people' campaign held at various places and grievances listened. Rs. 65 crores announced by the Chief Minister for immediate relief operations.

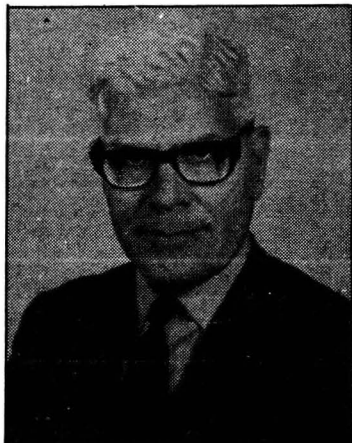
Non congress-I ruling state Andhra Pradesh seems to be a stage of running politics for union Ministers, even under widespread drought conditions. Two Union Ministers Mr. J. Vengala Rao and Mr. Arunachalam criticized State Chief Minister for not asking funds for relief works. As Mr. Rama Rao submitted a Memorandum to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi earlier seeking Rs.385 Crores, State Chief Minister accused of not sanctioning a single pie by the centre. He also raised his voice against the two Union Ministers for there false allegations. Mr. Rama Rao asked another Rs. 160.5 crores assistance while speaking to the central team that came to study the situation. Even Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's one day survey tour to the two districts affected came under criticism. Before departure the Prime Minister commented that there was no severe drought in Andhra. This remark came to severe criticism by State Chief Minister. 'Prime Ministers visit was political', exhorted Mr. Rama Rao. Mr. Gandhi Came here as congress-I man than Prime Minister he commented. The congress and Telugu Desam leaders accusing each other about Central assistance and also relief works taken by the State Government. And now it is time to Chalk out a programme for relief operations by all party committee rather than playing politics with drought.

Judging by the experience of working of the various poverty alleviation programmes, it may not be surprising if four-fifth of the amount spent lands into the pockets of the politicians, bureaucrats and the middlemen involved in the relief operations. These sections of the population are going to have a rich harvest of cash out of the current drought. In the past it was the trader and moneylender class that benefited from calamities like famine by indulging in antisocial trade practices. In modern times it is the relief operators and the political power-brokers who do so.

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Need for Drought Policy

B M Bhatia



This year's drought is one of the worst in India in the present century. The extent of rainfall failure may be seen from the fact that by 12 August, only 9 out of 35 meteorological subdivisions in the country had received normal or excess rainfall. In the corresponding period of last year 23 subdivisions had received normal rainfall. The figures for 1985-86 and 1984-85 were 27 and 26 respectively. The current year is the fourth drought year in succession but in severity and spread it beats not only the last three years but the previous serious droughts like those of 1979-80 and 1965-66 as well. Out of 407 districts of the country around 300 are afflicted by drought this year.

A drought of that magnitude, in earlier times, would have produced a terrible famine. Many a smaller drought did that in the nineteenth century. There is no such danger today. The reason is the bufferstock of 23 million tonnes that we have got in the public sector and the efficient public distribution system for foodgrains that we have built up over the last three decades. In the past it was not so much the actual shortage of foodgrains as the speculative activity of the traders who magnified actual shortage several fold to create a scare and thereby raise prices in their profiteering bid, that was responsible for distress and starvation of the poor. The existence of sizeable bufferstock prevents speculators to enter the grain trade in a spectacular way. That is the redeeming feature of the present situation.

a drawing down of buffer stocks to around 15 million tonnes at the end of the agricultural year i.e. June-end 1988. This is much above 10 million tonnes floor that we have fixed for keeping the reserve stock. We have, thus, a dependable food security system with us today to rule out the possibility of famine or starvation deaths due to foodshortage occurring anywhere unless of course foodgrains released for public distribution or food for work programmes are not allowed to reach the afflicted population in remote areas by the local politicians and power-brokers who may intercept these supplies to line their own pockets.

That, however, does not mean that drought these days poses no serious problem. After all the progress that the country has made in the last forty years in providing itself with means of irrigation, only 30 percent of Indian agriculture today is irrigated, the rest 70 percent being rainfed. The former accounts for 58% of the total grain output of the country and the latter for 42 percent. It is the latter that constitutes the drought challenge. The failure of rains in these areas means failure of crops, loss of employment to agricultural workers, and steep fall in agricultural incomes. The vast majority of the rural poor of the country as also most of the subsistence farmers live in these areas.

The loss of crops, here, means loss of food supply to subsistence farmers as well as to the village artisan dependent for his livelihood on the local farming community. Estimates made in a FICCI study on the subject suggest that assuming a ten percent loss in agricultural production, the income loss of agricultural sector due to this year's drought would be Rs. 8400 crores while a 20 percent drop in crop production would mean income loss of Rs. 16800 crores in terms of 1985-86 prices. The most adversely affected sections of population would be small farmers and landless labourers. The study suggests that "25 percent of the country's small

ing industry as well through forward and backward linkages between the two sectors of the economy. The prices of raw materials supplied from agriculture to industry would rise while demand for manufactured products in the rural areas would shrink due to fall in rural incomes. The industrial growth rate would also, thus, suffer a decline. The growth rate of the economy as a whole, or what is the same thing, of GNP in 1987-88 is likely to turn out to be no more than 1.5-2 per cent. This, broadly speaking, is the challenge to the country and the government that this year's drought poses. The nature of the challenge has to be clearly



understood for conducting any meaningful dialogue on the subject or taking any purposeful action for meeting it.

Continued on page 15

Unfortunately all energies of the ruling elite as well as of the Opposition parties and politicians are being directed to politicising the issue to get political mileage out of the affected people's misfortune. The drought is being presented as the biggest natural calamity of the present century for the country and claims are being laid on its occupying the sole attention of the Government at the moment to meet the challenge.

Buffer Stocks

Further, in normal years the offtake from public distribution system is around 12 to 14 million tonnes. As against that procurement in normal years is 14 to 18 million tonnes. This year offtake is likely to go up to 18 million tonnes while procurement may be no more than 10-11 million tonnes. There is thus likely to be

farmers and two thirds of landless labourers could get submerged into poverty" and that "instead to 38 percent, rural population below the poverty line may well jump up to 50 percent".

Agriculture and Industry

The fall in agricultural production is going to badly affect manufactur-

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